

**PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITIES AND NATIONAL MINORITIES:
MOLDOVA'S ACCOMMODATION OF THE GAGAUZ**

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Abbreviations and Glossary

<i>Apparatchik</i>	Bureaucrat, full-time Communist Party official
<i>Başkan</i>	Regional governor
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
GASSR	Gagauz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
<i>Județ</i>	County (<i>Romanian</i>)
<i>Kolkhoz</i>	Collective farm
<i>Komsomol</i>	Communist Union of Youth
MSSR	Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic
<i>Nomenklatura</i>	Privileged social group appointed by Communist system
<i>Oblast</i>	Region
<i>Okrug</i>	County (<i>Russian</i>)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<i>Raion</i>	District
TIKA	Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Note on Transliteration

The transliteration of Russian follows the system set out below. Exceptions to these rules are well known Russian names or words which have acquired a common English spelling (e.g. Yeltsin versus El'tsin). Gagauz names are transliterated using the Russian spelling found in archival documents.

Cyrillic Latin alphabet

а	a
б	b
в	v
г	g
д	d
е	e
ё	e
ж	zh
з	z
и	i
й	i
к	k
л	l
м	m
н	n
о	o
п	p
р	r
с	s
т	t
у	u
ф	f
х	kh
ц	ts
ч	ch
ш	sh
щ	shch
ъ	''
ы	y
ь	'
э	e
ю	iu
я	ia

Abstract

This thesis provides an institutional explanation for the peaceful solution of the conflict between the Moldovan state and its small Gagauz minority in the period from 1988 to 1995. The central argument is that different institutional arrangements during this time had a direct effect on the Moldovan state's capacity to bring about autonomy for the Gagauz.

I show how Gagauz leaders, conditioned by the territorial-based structures of the Soviet Union, mobilized a political movement to push for the creation of an autonomous republic, and how this preference for autonomy remained the consistent demand of the Gagauz throughout the early years of post-communist transition. This finding supports the contention that Gagauz preferences cannot be used to explain the rich variation in political outcomes during this period. I assert that the critical changes were essentially institutional: new electoral laws; revised parliamentary rules and procedures; and a complete rewriting of Moldova's constitution. These innovations were crucial in enabling the inclusive-minded majority in the Moldovan parliament to overcome the power of nationalist veto players by increasing the majority's control of the legislative agenda. The importance of these institutional factors is examined by careful analysis of the different stages of the Moldovan parliament's accommodation of the Gagauz: from separatism and stalemate to compromise. Furthermore, I reassert the central role of institutional arrangements by discounting the external influence of Turkey as a patron state on the successful negotiations between Moldova and the Gagauz.

Using previously unresearched archival material, unstructured interviews with many of the key actors, and local media reporting, this thesis challenges existing accounts of the Gagauz conflict in Moldova. These accounts assert that either the Gagauz reaction to titular nationalism or the shifting preferences of strategic-thinking elites was the key causal factor of

the political outcomes observed during this period. In contrast, this thesis shows that institutional design played a decisive role in the resolution of this conflict. The findings of this research offer useful lessons for other ethnically-divided states with mobilized minorities.

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INTRODUCTION

Research Question

Moldova's Accommodation of the Gagauz

Moldova, nestled between Romania and Ukraine, is indeed an unexpected place to find a success story. Geopolitically, it lies between East and West, acting like a turnstile bridge which is always turning and never connecting to either side. After Communist Party leader Vladimir Voronin was elected as Moldova's president in 2001, he promised to revolutionize Moldova into the "Cuba of Europe" in order to maintain Moldova's independence from the "imperialist predators" of the West.¹ A few years later an enlightened Voronin reversed course and announced that Moldova should embrace the idea of EU membership. As politicians like Voronin continually shift their positions, Moldova holds steady as the poorest country in Europe. However, in the midst of the constant shifting, there is a story of political manoeuvring, compromise, and settlement well worth discussing and devoting further study. It is Moldova's accommodation of the Gagauz.

The Gagauz are a Christian Turkic people who emigrated to Moldova (known then as Bessarabia) from the Dobruja region in modern day Bulgaria. There is no agreement on the history of the Gagauz.² One account of their historic origin asserts that the Gagauz are a 'Northern' Turkic people who travelled down to the region from the Russian steppes across the Danube some time between the 10th and 11th centuries.³ Another view holds that the Gagauz came to Bessarabia from the southern region of Anatolia after a Byzantine emperor

¹ BBC News, *Country Profile: Moldova* (2003); available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.

² A modern recounting lists over a dozen different theories. See Mustafa Argunsah, "The History of Gagauz," in *The Turks*, ed. Hasan Celâl Gèuzel, et al. (Ankara: Yeni Tèurkiye, 2002).

³ For an early view of this account, see Th. Menzel, "Gagauzes," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. M.T. Houtsma, et al. (London: Luzac and Co., 1927).

granted them that right during the pre-Ottoman times of the 13th century.⁴ Generally, scholars agree that during the late 18th and early 19th centuries most of the Gagauz moved from the Dobruja region to Bessarabia, then under Russian rule.⁵ Russia, as the “defender of Orthodoxy,” offered protection to the Gagauz who ostensibly left their homes to escape persecution from hostile neighbours.⁶ The majority of the Gagauz settled in what is now southern Moldova, living side-by-side with the other nationalities in the region.⁷

Today, Moldova is the “de facto homeland” of the Gagauz.⁸ In 1989, there were approximately 200,000 Gagauz in the Soviet Union with the vast majority of those living in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) and others in the outlying regions in Ukraine. Most of the Gagauz were concentrated in five *raions* in southern Moldova where they made up about half of the total population in the region. With this concentration, the Gagauz were able to maintain a sense of identity. During the 1989 census, at least 90% of the Gagauz reported Gagauz as their native language. They also displayed a resistance to assimilate as only 4% claimed proficiency in Moldovan, the lowest level of proficiency of all national minorities in Moldova.

In the late 1980s, Gagauz elites started an informal discussion club. Their publicly stated goal was to raise the profile of the Gagauz identity which they felt had suffered from decades of neglect. Within months, the discussion club began making specific political

⁴ Wittek (1952) based his work on Byzantine and Islamic primary sources. See Paul Wittek, "Yazijioghlu 'Ali' on the Christian Turks of the Dobruja," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 14, no. 3 (1952). Wittek's work was later incorporated in the authoritative *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. See Włodzimierz Zajackowski, "Gagauz," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. B Lewis, et al. (Leiden; London: E.J. Brill; Luzac & Co., 1965).

⁵ For a good summary of views, see Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 210-11.

⁶ George F. Jewsbury, *The Russian Annexation of Bessarabia, 1774-1828: A Study of Imperial Expansion* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Quarterly; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1976), 71.

⁷ For a comprehensive examination of the Gagauz origins from the Gagauz perspective, see Demirdirek's (2001) chapter 5, "Story of Gagauz history" in Hülya Demirdirek, "(Re)Making of a Place and Nation: Gagauzia in Moldova" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Oslo, 2001) 179-218.

⁸ This view is shared almost uniformly by the Gagauz elite. The quotation is from Charles King, "Minorities Policy in the Post-Soviet Republics: The Case of the Gagauzi," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20, no. 4 (1997), 741.

demands for a form of autonomy. The club transformed into a political movement and made several attempts to create a Gagauz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within Moldova. After officials in Chişinău rejected a parliamentary initiative to form an autonomous republic, the Gagauz unilaterally declared an independent republic within the Soviet Union.

During the early 1990s, the “Gagauz Republic” was one of many breakaway regions in the former Soviet Union whose status was unclear.⁹ When the Soviet Union disintegrated into 15 independent states, the Gagauz were forced to find a solution within the newly created Republic of Moldova. After a parliamentary stalemate, a peaceful settlement was eventually reached. While other breakaway regions were marked by tension and violence, the Gagauz held popular elections for a regional legislative body and governor. Over time, the Gagauz built new political structures and institutions in their recognized autonomous region within the centralized state of Moldova.

This unique settlement in a region pockmarked with separatism makes Moldova’s success even more intriguing. It raises many important questions as outcomes run counter to current empirical thought on the region and democracies in transition. Why was the Gagauz nationalist movement successful when it lacked a territorial structure to nurture it?¹⁰ If the preferences of the powerful elite are the key causal factor in predicting outcomes, why did Moldova’s leaders—who favoured Gagauz autonomy—struggle to adopt a solution?¹¹ What

⁹ Other regions included Russia’s Chechnya and Tatarstan, Ukraine’s Crimea, Georgia’s Abkhazia, Ajaria, and South Ossetia, Azerbaijan’s Nagorno-Karabakh, and Moldova’s other separatist region, Transnistria.

¹⁰ Some scholars argue that territorial structures based on national borders created ethnic identities and forced distinctions. See Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 23-54; Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*, ed. Jack Snyder, *Norton Series in World Politics* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).

¹¹ Related work examines the effect of elite preferences on the creation of electoral laws and presidencies. See Kenneth Benoit and John W. Schiemann, "Institutional Choice in New Democracies: Bargaining over Hungary's 1989 Electoral Law," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 13, no. 2 (2001); Timothy Frye, "A Politics of Institutional Choice: Post Communist Presidencies," *Comparative Political Studies* 30, no. 5 (1997).

enabled Moldova's inexperienced parliament to resolve the Gagauz question?¹²

Additionally, did Turkey's efforts as a patron state significantly influence Moldova's resolution of the political conflict with the Gagauz?¹³

This thesis addresses these questions with the first comprehensive work on Moldova's accommodation of the Gagauz. While scholars have described the events, no study has sought to put these causal variables into context to explain *why* and *how* Moldova's parliament adopted territorial autonomy for the Gagauz. This research provides a new understanding of what factors influenced Moldova's ability to resolve the issue.

To accomplish this, I use an institutional approach which focuses on parliamentary considerations of the issue between 1988 and 1995. More specifically, I analyze how different legislative agenda-setting arrangements in the All-Union, Soviet and post-Soviet Moldovan parliaments shaped the resolution of the conflict. The period encompasses the beginning of the Gagauz self-determination movement through to the implementation of legislation that created the Gagauz territorial autonomy structures. I rely primarily on archival documents, unstructured interviews with key political leaders, and local and regional media reporting to reconstruct the events of the period. By focusing on the Soviet institutions and those of the newly formed Republic of Moldova, the narrative gives fresh insight into what happened within the re-modelled republic-level legislature. This approach reveals the

¹² Until 1994, Moldova's parliament lacked professional deputies and suffered from a low-level of institutionalization. See William Crowther and Steven D. Roper, "A Comparative Analysis of Institutional Development in the Romanian and Moldovan Legislatures," in *The New Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. David M. Olson and Philip Norton (London; Portland, Or.: Frank Cass, 1996); Steven D. Roper, "The Impact of Moldovan Parliamentary Committee on the Process of Institutionalization," in *Committees in Post-Communist Democratic Parliaments: Comparative Institutionalization*, ed. David M. Olson and William Crowther (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2002a).

¹³ Autonomy arrangements are said to be more likely with positive assistance by an external actors. See Yash Pal Ghai, ed., *Autonomy and Ethnicity: Negotiating Competing Claims in Multi-Ethnic States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000b), 15-16; Hurst Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 456; Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Updated ed. (Berkeley ; London: University of California Press, 2000), 277.

complex social and political problems that faced political actors in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse.

In Moldova, certain institutional arrangements affected policy outcomes. I show how electoral laws, parliamentary rules, and the allocation of constitutional authority played an important role in determining the distribution of agenda control. When leaders of the majority party gained sufficient agenda-setting power, a compromise autonomy law was passed. In sum, institutional settings directly impacted on Moldova's ability as a state to respond favourably to Gagauz demands.

Significance

Moldova's conflict with the Gagauz is a compelling subject of study for several reasons. First, the length of the political negotiations from 1988 to 1995 provided an opportunity to observe a wide range of Soviet and Moldovan responses to Gagauz demands. Three different legislatures within Moldova dealt with the issue, from the Soviet-era Supreme Soviet, to the transitional 1990 legislature, and finally the first parliament elected within the newly established independent state. As many of the senior leadership remained the same, I focused on the workings of the Soviet and Moldovan legislatures, and more specifically the impact of agenda control on policy making in this area.

Second, the range of possible outcomes was broad enough to ensure the end solution was not predetermined. The Gagauz could have created their own independent state or settled for legal guarantees of minority rights protection. The breadth of options provided an ideal opportunity to apply theories that attempt to explain why certain political outcomes occur. The result has value for both political scientists and practitioners.

Third, Moldova is not an exceptional example. It resembles other Soviet and Yugoslav states which left crumbling federalist structures and began a process of democratic consolidation. These states continue to face difficulties in dealing with the demands of

minority nationalities.¹⁴ Some argue that the transition to democracy or the process of democratic consolidation is the cause of increased nationalistic conflict.¹⁵ Whatever the cause, it is evident that states struggle. As noted by one authority, “The prevalence of secessionist movements suggests that contemporary states have not developed effective means for accommodating ethnocultural diversity....As long as minority groups feel that their interests cannot be accommodated within existing states, they will contemplate secession.”¹⁶ This destabilizing phenomenon in struggling democracies has been the cause behind much of the Balkan and Caucasian regional conflicts. Academia is encouraged to assist with what is described as one of the most urgent problems facing practitioners—the reconciliation of nationalism and democracy in multiethnic settings.¹⁷

Examining why the Gagauz separated from Moldova and how Moldova’s parliament adopted autonomy for the Gagauz provides insight on how leaders of democratic states can peaceably create autonomous structures after divisions have already occurred. The question of institutional formation in democratic states is “arguably one of the most important issues in comparative politics.”¹⁸ This study of Moldova and the Gagauz contributes to conflict resolution efforts by exploring what role institutions—especially legislatures—play in the ‘reconciliation’ of nationalism and democracy.

With an understanding of the question and its significance, I consider the relevant literature in order to distinguish my contribution.

¹⁴ The recognition that democracies have difficulties with minority nationalities is centuries old and is still discussed at length today. For a nineteenth century view, see John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (London: Parker Son and Bourn, 1861). For a twenty-first century view, see Arend Lijphart, “The Wave of Power-Sharing Democracy,” in *The Architecture of Democracy: Constitutional Design, Conflict Management, and Democracy*, ed. Andrew Reynolds, *Oxford Studies in Democratization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹⁵ Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*.

¹⁶ Will Kymlicka, “Is Federalism a Viable Alternative to Secession,” in *Theories of Secession*, ed. Percy Lehning, *European Political Science Series* (London: Routledge, 1998), 112.

¹⁷ Alfred C. Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 182.

¹⁸ Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics,” in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, ed. Sven Steinmo, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 15.

Literature Review

Explanations have been offered to account for Moldova's dealings with the Gagauz from 1988 to 1995. Drawing on these explanations, I summarize the hypotheses, many of which focus on the Gagauz and Moldovan elite during this period. I then consider broader studies which look at the role of union republics in the dissolution of the Soviet Union. These accounts highlight the influence of political culture, the sequencing of key electoral events, and the impact of structural characteristics on group mobilization in this period. This review demonstrates a need for a new approach.

Moldovan Politics and Gagauz Preferences

Previous work has insufficiently identified key causal factors to explain why the Gagauz sought a form of autonomy. Researchers have made two assertions: (1) the Gagauz demands were a reaction to the mobilization of the titular nationality, namely the Moldovan national movement; and (2) Gagauz preferences shifted as strategic-thinking Gagauz elites calculated which solution would serve their interests.

The first assertion is that the Moldovan national movement was the primary causal factor in explaining the Gagauz drive for autonomy. This argument contends that the Gagauz elite, feeling threatened by the efforts of the Moldovans, manifested *reactive nationalism*. The descriptive phrase, "reactive nationalism" is attributed to the Gagauz by Crowther (1991) and repeated in several subsequent scholarly articles.¹⁹ It argues that the Gagauz and other

¹⁹ Jeff Chinn and Robert J. Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States* (Boulder, Colo; Oxford: Westview, 1996), 168; Jeff Chinn and Steven D. Roper, "Ethnic Mobilization and Reactive Nationalism: The Case of Moldova," *Nationalities Papers* 23, no. 2 (1995), 291; Will Kymlicka, "Nation-Building and Minority Rights: Comparing West and East," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 26, no. 2 (2000), 200; Claus Neukirch, "Autonomy and Conflict Transformation: The Gagauz Territorial Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova," in *Minority Governance in Europe*, ed. Kinga Gal, *Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues* (Budapest: 2002), 109; Steven D. Roper, "Regionalism in Moldova: The Case of Transnistria and Gagauzia," in *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union: Regions in Conflict*, ed. James Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Cass Series in Regional and Federal Studies* (London: Frank Cass, 2002b), 105; Alla Skvortsova, "The Cultural and Social Makeup of Moldova: A Bipolar or Dispersed Society," in *National Integration and Violent Conflict in Post-Soviet Societies*, ed. Pål Kolstø (Oxford: Rowman

minority nationalities in Transnistria mobilized in order to minimize concessions made by the state to the Moldovan majority.²⁰ Thus, Gagauz demands for territorial autonomy formed part of a defensive strategy. With this ordering of events, it is assumed that Gagauz preferences or the need for autonomy were a “response” or “reaction” to the Moldovan nationalists and growing separation between Chişinău and Moscow.²¹

This claim is problematic for two reasons: an unsupportable timeframe and misrepresentation of the Gagauz political movement. My research provides substantial evidence to show that the Gagauz elite had clearly articulated their goals prior to the exclusive Moldovan nationalist mobilization. Chapter One examines the roots of Gagauz preferences which explain the origin of the specific demand for territorial autonomy.

The second assertion is that Gagauz preferences were fluid and displayed significant variation over time. This argument suggests that the Gagauz position was framed by strategic-thinking political elites who wished to maintain control of local resources. One scholar concluded that “the essential [Gagauz] demand was in fact a greater share of the local control that Chişinău had begun to wrest from Moscow.”²² The claim is that the aims of the Gagauz movement adjusted accordingly to suit the ambitions of these strategists. The “shifting” Gagauz preferences ranged from “unclear” goals to a demand for “outright

& Littlefield, 2002), 181; Paula Thompson, "The Gagauz in Moldova and Their Road to Autonomy," in *Managing Diversity in Plural Societies: Minorities, Migration and Nation-Building in Post-Communist Europe*, ed. Magdalena Opalski (Nepean, Ontario: Forum Eastern Europe, 1998), 133.

²⁰ William Crowther, "The Politics of Ethno-National Mobilization: Nationalism and Reform in Soviet Moldavia," *The Russian Review* 50, no. 2 (1991), 195.

²¹ Judy Batt, "Federalism Versus Nationalism in Post-Communist State- Building: The Case of Moldova," *Regional and Federal Studies* 7, no. 3 (1997), 37; William Crowther, "The Politics of Democratization in Postcommunist Moldova," in *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997b), 292; King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 215. Ted Robert Gurr, *Peoples Versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000), 219.

²² King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 216-17.

independence.”²³ These Gagauz elites, it is argued, eventually calculated that autonomy would allow them to strengthen their positions within the region.²⁴ This led to the conclusion that a causal factor in the 1994 autonomy settlement was a change of Gagauz goals.²⁵ The settlement came about when the Gagauz moderated their demands and accepted territorial autonomy.

I offer a significantly different assessment of the Gagauz elite and their preferences. Instead of shifting goals, the Gagauz consistently demanded territorial autonomy from the inception of their political mobilization. Upon closer examination, several negotiated autonomy agreements were scuttled by the Moldovans, not the Gagauz. In the end, the Gagauz elite negotiated a settlement for territorial autonomy which jeopardized their own positions of power.²⁶ This research casts doubt on purely rationalist explanations for Gagauz demands. Both assertions—reactive nationalism and strategic-thinking elites—have missed the mark. An overemphasis on Gagauz actions obscures other factors which explain why a separation between the Gagauz and Moldova occurred and why a settlement was reached. I show in Chapter One that identifying consistent Gagauz preferences helps to isolate the effects of other influential variables on the separation of the Gagauz and the eventual settlement.

Scholars have also attempted to explain Moldova’s actions in response to Gagauz demands. Two interrelated assertions are: (1) Moldova’s leaders chose to compromise in order to minimize the costs of the Gagauz question; and (2) a turnover in Moldova’s

²³ Jeff Chinn and Steven D. Roper, "Territorial Autonomy in Gagauzia," *Nationalities Papers* 26, no. 1 (1998), 96; King, "Minorities Policy in the Post-Soviet Republics: The Case of the Gagauzi," 746; King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 129.

²⁴ King, "Minorities Policy in the Post-Soviet Republics: The Case of the Gagauzi," 752.

²⁵ Batt, "Federalism Versus Nationalism in Post-Communist State- Building: The Case of Moldova," 41; Chinn and Roper, "Territorial Autonomy in Gagauzia," 96-97.

²⁶ The Gagauz Republic President, Stepan Topal, Vice President, Petr Buzadji, Speaker of the Gagauz Supreme Soviet, Mikhail Kendigelian, and the lead negotiator on the final commission, Ivan Burgudji, each lost in contested races for elected offices in the new autonomy structures. See International Foundation for Electoral Systems, *Republic of Moldova Local Elections: April 16, 1995* (Chişinău: Tish Ltd., 1995).

leadership resulted in the negotiated compromise. Both arguments credit Moldova's elite preferences, framed within the political context of Moldova's civil war with Transnistria, as the causal factor in producing a negotiated solution.²⁷ Due to the strength of separatist Transnistria, Moldova's "political elite came to change its mind" and accept the liberal territorial autonomy solution for the Gagauz.²⁸ As they needed a precedent which could be applied to Transnistria, the "Moldovan authorities had little choice" but to grant the Gagauz autonomy.²⁹ After the civil war, it is claimed that new political leaders seized the initiative in an intra-elite competition and then achieved victory in Moldova's parliamentary elections of 1994. These moderate Moldovan elites, supported by general public opinion, then worked for a compromise with the Gagauz.³⁰

I accept the assessment that Moldova's elite were more concerned about the cost of failing to solve the Gagauz question than the actual solution itself. It is also true that parliamentary elections strengthened the moderate forces in parliament. However, there is little evidence to support the view that the 1992 civil war resulted in a negotiated settlement with the Gagauz or that the settlement came due to a *change* in Moldova's elite. First, Moldova's political elite were negotiating with the Gagauz prior to the civil war. Second, the stalemate in Moldova's parliament over the Gagauz question happened after the 1992 civil war. Third, there was not a significant leadership change from the stalemate to the settlement. An examination of Moldova's legislative struggle to reach a compromise

²⁷ Claus Neukirch, "National Minorities in the Republic of Moldova--Some Lessons Learned, Some Not?," *South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs* 2, no. 3 (1999), 56. In 1992, Moldova and Transnistrian forces fought a bloody civil war over control of the major cities and bridges near the *Dnestr* (Russian) or *Nistru* (Romanian) river. With assistance of the Russian military forces leftover from the Soviet 14th Army, the Transnistrians maintained control of the region and set up their own separatist republic complete with their own currency and border guards.

²⁸ Batt, "Federalism Versus Nationalism in Post-Communist State- Building: The Case of Moldova," 46.

²⁹ Chinn and Roper, "Territorial Autonomy in Gagauzia," 96.

³⁰ William Crowther, "Ethnic Politics and the Post-Communist Transition in Moldova," *Nationalities Papers* 26, no. 1 (1998), 158.

strongly suggests that other causal factors were at work for which neither assertion accounts. These arguments are made in Chapters Four and Five.

Other explanations emphasize the influential role of international actors on Moldova as the catalyst for adopting autonomy. Moldova needed economic assistance and wanted favourable international recognition. Gagauz autonomy became a vehicle by which they could obtain both.³¹ It is argued that Moldova solved the Gagauz question in order to receive additional aid from Turkey and international recognition for their non-violent solution.³²

While external influences like patron states and international pressure helped contribute to the settlement, they were not essential for it to happen. Turkey mellowed Gagauz methods but Turkish assistance was not conditional on an agreement between Moldova and the Gagauz. International recognition was only a by-product of the settlement. I expand these arguments further in Chapter Six. I now consider studies which viewed Moldova's events from a broader perspective.

Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics

Linz and Stepan (1996) propose that the sequencing of events at the Soviet level fuelled the nationalist themes which dominated Moldova's political elite.³³ They argue that specific institutions and principles of the Soviet Union's territorial ethnofederal structure created incentives and resources for the politization of ethnicity. Combined with the policies of perestroika and glasnost, this led to a liberalization but not democratization of the central power structures. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's key mistake, it is claimed, was holding

³¹ Claus Neukirch, "Russia and the OSCE- the Influence of Interested Third and Disinterested Fourth Parties on the Conflicts in Estonia and Moldova," *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (2001); Vladimir Socor, "Demirel Asserts Turkish Interests in Ukraine and Moldova," *RFE/RL Research Report* 3, no. 31 (1994a), 20; Thompson, "The Gagauz in Moldova and Their Road to Autonomy."

³² Vladimir Socor, "Gagauz Autonomy in Moldova: A Precedent for Eastern Europe?," *RFE/RL Research Report* 3, no. 33 (1994c), 21-22; Thompson, "The Gagauz in Moldova and Their Road to Autonomy," 137-38. After the Baltics, Moldova gained Council of Europe membership before any other former Soviet republic.

³³ Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 366-83.

republic wide parliamentary elections prior to competitive all-Union level elections. The elections in Moldova and elsewhere had an immediate impact on local politics: the creation of national identities, legitimate state institutions, and new power structures.³⁴ Moldova's nationalists secured power in the republic-level parliament, pushed for increased sovereignty, and made declarations regarding independence. It is proposed that these actions led to the interethnic clashes in Moldova (the separatist movements of the Gagauz and Transnistrians) as minorities opposed Moldova's drive for independence.³⁵

Yet, mobilized groups like the Gagauz are not accurately accounted for in Linz and Stepan's rendition of events.³⁶ The sequence of elections had minimal causal effect on the Gagauz demands for autonomy as the mobilization of the Gagauz elite occurred prior to both the 1989 and 1990 elections. The elections did not create the demand for autonomy as described by Linz and Stepan (1996). The proximate effect of the elections was that the weakening of the centre determined which government body could create the autonomous structures demanded by the Gagauz. Chapters One and Two discuss the relative impact of the 1989 and 1990 elections on the Gagauz within a rapidly changing Soviet Union.

Other comparative work provides explanations for Gagauz demands and Moldova's response. In a comparative study of Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, Parrott (1997) argues that a civic political culture is present if a country deals with "political conflict through compromise rather than coercion or violence."³⁷ According to this perspective,

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Brown (2001) disagrees with the significance that Linz and Stepan give to the sequencing of the 1989 and 1990 elections. See footnote three in Archie Brown, ed., *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001b), 11-12. In general, Brown sides with an institutional explanation of events which examines the impact of Gorbachev's reforms.

³⁷ Bruce Parrott, "Perspectives on Postcommunist Democratization," in *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 21. The political culture argument is also discussed in Stephen Whitefield, *Political Culture and Post-Communism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan in association with St. Antony's College Oxford, 2005).

another contributory factor to the negotiated adoption of autonomy was Moldova's civic culture.³⁸

I argue that the presence of a particular political culture does not explain the variance in outcomes from 1988 to 1995. If Moldova's civic culture contributed to the negotiated settlement reached in 1994, why was it powerless to stop the separation which occurred in 1990 or the stalemate which occurred in 1993? While not dismissing culture as an influence, I argue that it does not play a significant causal role in determining the outcomes studied in this research.

Another work offers a comprehensive structural approach to explain the collapse of the Soviet state. It describes how a tide of nationalist events swept over republics like Moldova and mobilized nationalist movements like the Moldovan Popular Front.³⁹ Beissinger (2002) pays considerable attention to the recursive nature of nationalist demonstrations called "events."⁴⁰ A key argument in this work is that national groups (like the Gagauz) differed in their capacity to take advantage of the tidal influence of other events. The difference is based on structural characteristics which act as either advantages or disadvantages.⁴¹ It is the culmination of these structural advantages (or disadvantages) which impacts on the mobilization of a particular group.

³⁸ Other cultural approaches would question the ability of Moldova to have a civic political culture. Jowitt (1992) argued that the cultural "inheritance" of forty years of Leninist rule would shape the successor culture and institutions. His analysis predicted that this legacy of bureaucracy, corruption and interpersonal distrust would result in centralized power and authoritarian government across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. See Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley; Oxford: University of California Press, 1992). A similar view argues that civic culture is in direct competition with the cultural effects of the Soviet era. See Timothy J. Colton and Robert C. Tucker, *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership* (Boulder, Colo; Oxford: Westview, 1995).

³⁹ Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴⁰ Defined as occurrences that interrupt routine processes and procedures.

⁴¹ Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, 206. The impact of institutional constraints is mentioned but not fully developed.

The predictive power of these structural characteristics is noticeably lacking for the Gagauz.⁴² Per Beissinger's calculations, the Gagauz have a .31 probability of "some" separatist mobilization, which is far short of the mobilization success they experienced.⁴³ The Gagauz "anomaly" is explained with an assertion that the Gagauz exhibited a "reactive response to the emergence of Moldovan separatism."⁴⁴ Beissinger argues that the Gagauz elite, like the Abkhaz, used USSR state sponsorship and support from local nomenklatura to push them over the structural disadvantage threshold.⁴⁵ The effect of both forces—the tidal "events" in Moldova against Moscow and the support of Soviet forces—was strong enough to allow the Gagauz to mobilize successfully, even when faced with its particular structural disadvantages.⁴⁶

The empirical evidence in this study challenges this structural model. The details in Chapters One and Two show that during the end of the 1980s, the Gagauz mobilized at the same time as Moldovan nationalists. Both groups were lifted with the self-determination tide washing across the Soviet Union. Instead of a reactive response to Moldova's separation, the Gagauz mobilized to repair the decades of neglect caused by the Soviet system. And unlike the Abkhaz and every other group in Beissinger's dataset of forty nationalities, the Gagauz did not have "state sponsorship" to support its movement.⁴⁷ With an emphasis on structural characteristics, Beissinger's model makes the Gagauz anomaly *less* understandable. Explaining how the Gagauz succeeded against structural disadvantages and institutional constraints is further justification for a new approach.

⁴² Other mispredicted cases include the Abkhaz, Baskirs, and the Tuvans.

⁴³ Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, 222.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 226.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 238.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 226-38.

⁴⁷ All the other groups were supported by an ethnoterritorial structure--republic, autonomous republic, autonomous oblast, or autonomous okrugs. After the Gagauz separated, Soviet troops came to maintain security at the request of Moldova's President but stayed only a few months.

Need for New Approach

Published work on Moldova's interaction with the Gagauz leaves several significant questions unexplained. To address this deficiency, I make the following claims which provide the basis for a new understanding of the events in Moldova from 1988 to 1995:

1. Gagauz leaders were concerned about preserving the Gagauz identity within the Soviet Union. These concerns became the mobilizing force of a political movement which pushed for the creation of an autonomous republic. When the Soviet Union dissolved, Gagauz preferences remained consistent as they negotiated with Moldova's parliament for a form of territorial autonomy.
2. Institutional arrangements within the Soviet Union and then the Republic of Moldova directly impacted on Moldova's handling of Gagauz demands for autonomy. The inability of the majority party or bloc to maintain legislative agenda control initially prevented Moldova's political elite from reaching a settlement. Institutional changes in electoral law, parliamentary rules, and constitutional authority were imperative for Moldova's parliament to pass a compromise solution for the Gagauz.
3. The settlement of territorial autonomy was due to an inclusive-minded majority in parliament which had sufficient agenda control to produce the legislative outcomes it desired. The new constitution also empowered Moldova's president, who assisted in bringing about a compromise agreement and then pressured the parliamentary leadership to pass it. External actors like Turkey influenced the process but did not change these outcomes.

I use an institutional approach to examine these claims. The next two sections describe the methods, data and theoretical frameworks used.

Methods and Data

Methods

To determine what led to the eventual settlement between Moldova and the Gagauz, I focus on how Moldova's institutions handled Gagauz demands from 1988 to 1995. The different policy outcomes are viewed as dependent variables, while the preferences of Moldova's key actors and constraining or enabling features of the state institutions are the independent variables. As Gerring (2004) notes, a single case offers multiple observations of the causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables, at the very least before and after the event or outcome.⁴⁸ This case offers many observations of the effects of independent variables as there were a wide range of outcomes between Moldova and the Gagauz during the period of study.

I utilize comparative methodological tools to increase confidence in establishing the causal relationship between certain parliamentary features and political outcomes. To begin, I build an analytic narrative to examine the key actors, their preferences, and the institutions in which they operated. The analytic narrative affords the use of established theories, which can help predict expected outcomes and, in turn, increase confidence in the discovered findings.

The 'congruence method' is a complimentary tool to strengthen the validity of causation arguments as it forces the researcher to rely on theory to explain the covariance between the independent and dependent variables. As described by George and Bennett (2005) the congruence method employs previously observed effects of independent variables to predict outcomes in the case at hand.⁴⁹ If the predicted outcomes occur as expected, this

⁴⁸ John Gerring, "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?," *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 2 (2004), 343.

⁴⁹ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: MIT Press, 2005), 181.

consistency with developed theory provides additional trust in the findings of the particular case.⁵⁰ To understand the resolution of the Gagauz conflict by the Moldovan parliament, I use theoretical propositions derived from comparative legislative analysis on the effects of party strength and agenda control on legislative decision-making.

The congruence method is most effective when coupled with ‘process-tracing’ or the ‘within-case method.’ I employ process-tracing within a theoretical framework to make a “more precise characterization” of initial conditions before the eventual outcomes.⁵¹ Process-tracing examines the initial conditions under which the significant variables are translated into outcomes.⁵² The goal in this case is to provide an unbroken chain of events which lead from the early negotiations over Gagauz autonomy to the final settlement. When used in conjunction with theory, process-tracing becomes a “powerful method” to develop generalizations about how causal relationships operated during Moldova’s dealings with the Gagauz.⁵³

Another tool I utilize is ‘in-case comparisons.’ The in-case comparison examines how changes in an independent variable may have caused variation in a dependent variable in a single unit over time. As noted by Gerring (2001) it uses a variation of Mill’s “most-similar” method of analysis.⁵⁴ In-case comparison offers a near controlled environment by which to observe causal relationships. It allows the researcher to rule out probable causes that did not change when certain events or outcomes occurred. It works best when there are many observations of values of both the independent and dependent variables and when those

⁵⁰ The theory may be well-established or it may be a first-time postulation by another researcher.

⁵¹ David Dressler quoted in George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 148.

⁵² Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 64-67.

⁵³ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 129. Gerring calls this same methodological tool “pattern-matching.” See Gerring, “What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?,” 348.

⁵⁴ John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 223.

values vary sharply over time.⁵⁵ In this study the independent variables included a wide variety of institutional arrangements, such as Moldova's transformation from a Soviet-style government to a semi-presidential system between 1988 and 1995. The dependent variables were the different outcomes of legislative bargaining during this period; these included secession by the Gagauz, a legislative stalemate, and a negotiated settlement.

Finally, counterfactuals are also used to help understand possible causal relationships. In this study counterfactuals show the impact of certain institutional features by looking at what would have happened if an alternative feature had existed.⁵⁶ These mental experiments essentially examine what might or might not have happened as a result of changes in certain independent variables. As noted by Fearon (1991), counterfactual comparisons can help to strengthen causal arguments by using scenarios to illustrate how changes in a particular variable would have made a difference in the observed outcome.⁵⁷

These tools help in determining the strength of the causal arguments made in this thesis. I acknowledge that there are weaknesses when dealing with a single-case. A noteworthy criticism is the possible inability to generalize findings from a single case to other cases. The use of methodological tools helps address this criticism. The discovery of expected findings in the Moldova case adds confidence in its comparability. I now address how the research data enables the use of these particular tools.

Data

Explaining why groups and states act is a challenging yet achievable goal. As noted in King, Keohane, and Verba (1994), "We want social science theories to provide causal explanations of events ... [and] to give an account of the reasons for or meanings of social

⁵⁵ Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 62.

⁵⁶ For more details on counterfactual limitations, see George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 167-70.

⁵⁷ James D. Fearon, "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991), 194.

action. We want to know not only what caused the agent to perform some act but also the agent's reasons for taking the action.”⁵⁸ I target the ‘agent’s reasons’ by using a variety of sources and materials to provide a “thick description” of what transpired.⁵⁹ Primary sources used are archival data, participant interviews, and local media reporting.

Archival data consists of materials from several different sources. The most significant source is the parliamentary archives of the Republic of Moldova, which are managed by the Department for Parliamentary Documentation [*Directia Documentare Parlamentara*]. This wide-range of documents includes presidential correspondence, Soviet Union directives, private telegrams, minutes of commission meetings, committee reports, and parliamentary proceedings. Other documents are from the former archive of the Communist Party of Moldova—the Archive of Social-Political Organizations of the Republic of Moldova [*Arhiva Organizatiilor Social-Politice a Republicii Moldova*]. These documents yield substantial information on the pre-1988 period within the Moldavian SSR when government policy was set by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Another source of material is from the Comrat Museum in southern Moldova which covered the political history of Gagauz autonomy. Finally, personal archives provided by Stepan Bulgar and Ion Ungureanu are utilized. Bulgar is Gagauz, a historian and original member of the first Gagauz political movement. Ungureanu is Moldovan, a lawyer and former Member of Parliament, who headed the parliamentary commission which negotiated the compromise solution with the Gagauz in 1994.

Unstructured interviews of key participants added to the level of detail needed for this study as they helped to reconstruct actor preferences and clarify how the “respondent sees the

⁵⁸ John Ferejohn is quoted in Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton ; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1994), 36-37.

⁵⁹ Clifford Geertz, *An Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

world.”⁶⁰ In this study, over fifty leaders were interviewed including Mircea Snegur, President of Moldova (1990-1996), Stepan Topal, President of the self-declared Gagauz Republic (1991-1995), and Suleyman Demirel, President of Turkey (1993-2000). I also interviewed the chairmen of the four most significant Moldovan commissions which worked on the Gagauz issue. Other officials included Moldova’s Prime Minister (1992-1997), the current and former Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, current and former ambassadors from Moldova, Turkey and the US, representatives of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), current and former parliamentary deputies, current and former Gagauz leaders, academics, media journalists, government advisors, and party activists. Interviews were recorded and most were transcribed.

Local media reporting was used to verify events, obtain official government decrees, and at times provide the perspectives of leaders when events transpired. Russian language sources included the state newspaper of Moldova, *Sovetskaya Moldavia*, (later renamed *Nezavisimaya Moldova*), Moscow news sources (e.g. TASS), and other Soviet newspapers. English language sources included the Moldovan news services BASAPRESS and INFOTAG, Moscow services INTERFAX and ITAR-TASS, Turkey’s *Turkish Daily News* and Bucharest’s ROMPRES. Reports from the *US Foreign Broadcast Information Service* (FBIS), the *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* and *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* provided English language translations of local and regional reporting. The assistance of a translator was utilized when reviewing Romanian (Moldovan) local newspapers like *Tara* and *Literatura și Artă*. Together, these data provided a thorough reconstruction of events from 1988 to 1995, and a detailed description of key actors, their preferences, and the institutions in which they operated.

⁶⁰ Grant David McCracken, *The Long Interview, Qualitative Research Methods; V. 13* (Newbury Park, Calif. ; London: Sage, 1988), 21.

Impact of Research on Question

Through archival material, unstructured interviews, and local media coverage, it is possible to make a chain of cause-and-effect linkages between factors and outcomes.

Archival material details the state response to the Gagauz. It identifies how government institutions coordinated a formal effort to improve the development of Gagauz culture and identity. It also provides evidence on how leaders attempted to respond to demands made by the Gagauz elite. Interviews allow these leaders to explain their actions and identify what factors constrained their decisions. Local and regional media reports give context to the actions, the events surrounding them, and what outcomes occurred.

The totality of the research helps identify key players and their preferences. It also details Soviet and Moldovan institutions and their relevant features. The data enables a compelling explanation of events that is subject to inference and theorizing in order to uncover what Geertz (1973) calls “the informal logic of actual life.”⁶¹ The thesis is presented in a framework described in the following section.

Theoretical Framework

This thesis is an analytic narrative, using “stories, accounts, and context” while relying on “formal lines of reasoning” to “facilitate both exposition and explanation” using an institutional framework.⁶² To do this, I incorporate the methodological tools described earlier and use ‘formal lines of reasoning’ from the New Institutionalism literature to provide a theoretical framework. New Institutionalism examines why states produce different political outcomes by studying the relationship between individual preferences and institutions.⁶³ The premise of this literature is: “no view of politics can rely exclusively on

⁶¹ Geertz, *An Interpretation of Cultures*, 17.

⁶² Robert H. Bates et al., *Analytic Narratives* (Princeton, N.J. ; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1998), 10.

⁶³ Institutions are considered “both formal organizations and informal rules and procedures that structure conduct.” See Thelen and Steinmo, “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics,” 2. For a review of the

either institutions, on the one hand, or interests and actors, on the other; both components are necessary to our understanding of the past and to our role as the subjects of the future.”⁶⁴

A basic equation is useful to represent how the interaction of preferences and institutions produces outcomes.⁶⁵ It is depicted as:

Preferences x Institutions → Outcomes

This model posits that as preferences change, outcomes can change, even if institutions remain constant. Conversely, if institutions change, outcomes can change, even if preferences remain constant.⁶⁶

There is a rational choice argument against blending preferences with institutions which states that preference formation should be treated as exogenous to the institutional setting.⁶⁷ It implies that in this case, as Moldova was in transition, the rules and processes of the institutions may have had little effect on the political outcomes. This view holds that only the preferences of the key political actors determined the settlement and other outcomes between Moldova and the Gagauz.⁶⁸

I disagree. First, institutional rules matter, especially in transition, because they give the new political actors a role and stage upon which to act. Weyland's (2002) analysis of Latin American systems supports this argument. He cautions against explanations that use

New Institutionalism literature and arguments, see Junko Kato, "Review Article: Institutions and Rationality in Politics--Three Varieties of Neo-Institutionalists," *British Journal of Political Science* 26, no. 4 (1996).

⁶⁴ Ellen M. Immergut, "The Rules of the Game: The Logic of Health Policy-Making in France, Switzerland, and Sweden," in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, ed. Sven Steinmo, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992b), 85.

⁶⁵ This general theory is briefly discussed in Melvin J. Hinich and Michael C. Munger, *Analytical Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 17. Hinich and Munger attribute the formal theory to Charles Plott, "Will Economics Become an Experimental Science," *Southern Economic Journal* 57, no. 4 (1991).

⁶⁶ Hinich and Munger, *Analytical Politics*, 17-18.

⁶⁷ See Benoit and Schiemann, "Institutional Choice in New Democracies: Bargaining over Hungary's 1989 Electoral Law," 154; Frye, "A Politics of Institutional Choice: Post Communist Presidencies."; Barbara Geddes, "Initiation of New Democratic Institutions in Eastern Europe and Latin America," in *Institutional Design in New Democracies*, ed. Arend Lijphart and Carlos H. Waisman, *Latin America in Global Perspective* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1996).

⁶⁸ This argument is used to explain Yeltsin's actions during his early years of leadership. See Colton and Tucker, *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*.

preferences alone to explain outcomes and warns “accounts with their parsimonious focus on self-interest calculations are therefore incomplete or misleading.”⁶⁹

Second, political outcomes reflect the institutional limitations of the system and rarely match the optimal design or timing of actor preferences. The literature shows that preferences are repeatedly subjugated to institutional rules and procedures.⁷⁰ As Huber (1996) argues: “Even if majority rule of some sort is used in the choice of institutional arrangements, it is always the case that institutional arrangements constrain who can make proposals, when proposals can be made, what types of proposals are permissible and how they will be ultimately selected.”⁷¹

I apply the institutional model to explain political outcomes which occurred when the Gagauz demanded territorial autonomy. One outcome was the Gagauz *separation* from Moldova on 19 August 1990. A second outcome was the *stalemate* between Moldova and the Gagauz which occurred from 1991 to 1993. A third outcome was the *settlement* between the two parties which resulted in the creation of an autonomous region in 1995. These three periods with their distinctive outcomes—*separation*, *stalemate*, and *settlement*—make up the nucleus of the thesis. Each of these three periods can be used to isolate the causal influence of preferences and institutions on the observed variance in outcomes.

To identify these causal influences, I now summarize the main theoretical propositions derived by comparative legislative research. These studies, which will provide the framework for analysis, identify which political actors are most relevant and which

⁶⁹ Kurt Weyland, "Limitations of Rational-Choice Institutionalism for the Study of Latin American Politics," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 37, no. 1 (2002), 72.

⁷⁰ John Elster, "Rational Choice History: A Case of Excessive Ambition," *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 3 (2000); Donald L. Horowitz, "Constitutional Design: Proposals Versus Processes," in *The Architecture of Democracy: Constitutional Design, Conflict Management, and Democracy*, ed. Andrew Reynolds, *Oxford Studies in Democratization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics* (Oxford: Free Press; Maxwell Macmillan, 1989); Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁷¹ John D. Huber, *Rationalizing Parliament: Legislative Institutions and Party Politics in France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 61.

features of the institutions, especially legislatures, have the greatest impact on policy outcomes. As noted by Thelen and Steinmo (1992), institutional rules constrain the preferences of key actors by providing a structure for political battles and in so doing, affect their outcomes.⁷² This theoretical background helps to guide the narrative, isolate key actors and institutional features, and provide context to the Moldovan case.

Political Actors and Agenda Setters

I first review the theoretical literature on legislative agenda-setting. Herein, particular attention is given to the role of agenda setters in the parliament—parties, committees and legislative leaders—and the executive—the government and president.

PARLIAMENT

Within most parliaments, several political actors shape the process of agenda-setting: political parties, legislative committees, and the assembly's leadership. First, leaders of political parties, especially majority parties, are important because they typically exert direct influence over the parliamentary process.⁷³ As noted by Cox and McCubbins (2005), "Parties matter ... not so much because they influence how members vote on bills (although they do), but rather because the majority party controls which bills their (and other) members have an opportunity to vote on to begin with."⁷⁴

Second, committees and specifically committee chairs are also significant. Yet, the amount of agenda control they wield varies widely and is determined by particular rules and procedures.⁷⁵ These include the ability to offer amendments to government legislation, to

⁷² Thelen and Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," 3.

⁷³ Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁷⁴ Ibid, 221.

⁷⁵ Committee power in the US Congress as described by Shepsle and Weingast (1981, 1982, and 1987) is greatly affected by whether or not the committee is able to use a closed or open rule with its legislative proposals. See Kenneth A. Shepsle and Barry A. Weingast, "Structure-Induced Equilibria and Legislative Choice," *Public Choice* 37 (1981); Kenneth A. Shepsle and Barry A. Weingast, "Institutionalizing Majority Rule: A Social

control the committee's timetable, and to decide whether the committee considers the bill before it is brought to the floor.⁷⁶

Finally, legislative leaders matter. Most weighty is the parliamentary president, who has a specific designation such as Speaker, Chairman, or President.⁷⁷ In half of the Western European parliamentary systems, the speaker of parliament has the authority to set the agenda of plenary sessions.⁷⁸ Speakers also wield agenda control by influencing what happens to a bill after its introduction in parliament. Constrained to varying degrees by standing orders and precedent, speakers can select which committee will discuss a particular bill, determine the sequence of voting on different proposals, and designate the procedures for voting.⁷⁹

In the Moldovan parliament, all three institutional agenda-setters were important. In this study, I focus particular attention on the role of Moldova's political parties (notably the Popular Front and Agrarian Party), special parliamentary commissions created to study the Gagauz question, and the relevant parliamentary chairmen. These key legislative actors directly affected the legislation related to autonomy for the Gagauz.

GOVERNMENT

In many parliamentary systems, governments directly influence legislative outcomes.⁸⁰ Some states have constitutional provisions which give government legislation

Choice Theory with Policy Implications," *American Economic Review* 72, no. 2 (1982); Kenneth A. Shepsle and Barry A. Weingast, "The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power," *American Political Science Review* 81, no. 1 (1987).

⁷⁶ George Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work* (New York; Princeton, N.J.: Russell Sage Foundation; Princeton University Press, 2002), 101-03.

⁷⁷ Marcelo Jenny and Wolfgang C. Muller, "Presidents of Parliament: Neutral Chairmen or Assets of the Majority," in *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, ed. Herbert Döring (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag; St. Martin's Press, 1995), 327.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 331. Even then, in the majority of cases the agenda can still be changed.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 331-33. Speakers can use their power in a partisan manner (as does the Speaker of the US House of Representatives) to reflect the preferences of the majority party or act in a purely non-partisan matter (as found in the House of Commons). See Kaare Strøm, "Parliamentary Government and Legislative Organisation," in *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, ed. Herbert Döring (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag; St. Martin's Press, 1995), 69.

⁸⁰ In over 50% of all countries, governments introduce more than 90% of the bills. See Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*, 93.

priority or special treatment (like the closed rule or package vote).⁸¹ Parliamentary standing orders can dictate that the government holds the exclusive right to initiate certain bills, e.g., any increase in expenditures or taxation.⁸² In the Moldovan case, I consider the influence of governments and prime ministers on policy and legislation related to the Gagauz.

PRESIDENT

Presidents can also shape the policy outputs of a parliament. In presidential or semi-presidential systems, the president's power over legislation is based generally on the constitution.⁸³ Some presidential systems are strong but lack constitutional powers; in others, powers are delegated from the legislature, according to the strength of the president's parliamentary majority; and in some political systems, the agenda-setting powers of presidents stems from their authority to introduce legislative proposals.⁸⁴ Presidents often have constitutional provisions that allow a form of veto to either block specific legislation or express disapproval. Another form of presidential power is the ability to issue executive decrees.⁸⁵ Decree authority gives presidents an indirect influence over agenda setters in the legislature.⁸⁶ In this study, the presidents in both the Soviet Union and Moldova are shown to have a direct impact on the political outcomes observed.

In the next section, I review theoretical findings on the causal influence of institutional features, particularly those that deal with agenda control. As Moser (1999) notes

⁸¹ Huber, *Rationalizing Parliament: Legislative Institutions and Party Politics in France*, 31-35.

⁸² Herbert Döring, "Time as a Scarce Resource: Government Control of the Agenda," in *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, ed. Herbert Döring (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag; St. Martin's Press, 1995b), 232.

⁸³ Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 133.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 139; Matthew Soberg Shugart and Stephan Haggard, "Institutions and Public Policy in Presidential Systems," in *Presidents, Parliaments, and Policy*, ed. Stephan Haggard and Mathew D. McCubbins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 78-81. Some presidents benefit from provisions which give the president *exclusive* rights to introduce certain types of legislative proposals such as budgetary matters. See Shugart and Haggard, "Institutions and Public Policy in Presidential Systems," 77.

⁸⁵ Stephan Haggard, Mathew D. McCubbins, and Matthew Soberg Shugart, "Conclusion: Policy Making in Presidential Systems," in *Presidents, Parliaments, and Policy*, ed. Stephan Haggard and Mathew D. McCubbins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 322; Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 140-42.

⁸⁶ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 142.

“The design of legislative procedures, particularly the allocation of agenda rights, influences the outcome of policy choices.”⁸⁷

Agenda Control and Policy Outcomes

The comparative legislative studies literature asserts that significant policy consequences result from the way parliaments organise agenda control.⁸⁸ Shepsle and Weingast (1982) argue that agenda control is the *central* characteristic of legislatures.⁸⁹ On a practical level, the agenda governs what bills will be considered by legislators and when. On a theoretical level, the agenda uses a set of rules to constrain the preferences of legislators, which might otherwise fracture along multiple issue dimensions and prevent stable policy outputs.⁹⁰

The distribution of agenda-setting power is a significant feature of political systems. Two examples help to illustrate this point. A study of European parliaments found evidence that systems where governments have strong control of the agenda pass laws that are more conflictual.⁹¹ Another study showed that when committees have strong agenda control, legislatures will produce an “oversupply” of economically inefficient projects or “pork barrel” legislation.⁹² Identifying the factors that affect agenda control is essential to determine which independent variables are relevant for explaining the outcomes examined in this case.

⁸⁷ Peter Moser, "The Impact of Legislative Institutions on Public Policy: A Survey," *European Journal of Political Economy* 15, no. 1 (1999), 25.

⁸⁸ Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*; Herbert Döring, *Parliamentary Agenda Control and Legislative Outcomes in Western Europe*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, [Offprint] (2001); Herbert Döring, ed., *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe* (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag; St. Martin's Press, 1995c); Haggard, McCubbins, and Shugart, "Conclusion: Policy Making in Presidential Systems."; Shepsle and Weingast, "Institutionalizing Majority Rule: A Social Choice Theory with Policy Implications," 369.

⁸⁹ Shepsle and Weingast, "Institutionalizing Majority Rule: A Social Choice Theory with Policy Implications," 371.

⁹⁰ Strøm, "Parliamentary Government and Legislative Organisation."

⁹¹ Döring, *Parliamentary Agenda Control and Legislative Outcomes in Western Europe*, 159.

⁹² Shepsle and Weingast, "Institutionalizing Majority Rule: A Social Choice Theory with Policy Implications," 369-70.

To understand the relationship between agenda control and policy outcomes it is necessary to examine how legislative arrangements and parliamentary composition shape (1) the majority's ability to set the agenda; (2) the power of the opposition or minority groups to influence the agenda; and (3) the majority's voting cohesion and party discipline. I now consider each of these three areas.

MAJORITY RULE

Several institutional features impact on the majority's ability to set the agenda.⁹³ Most significantly, party leaders exert their majority control over legislative proceedings by choosing their own members for key positions in the parliament.⁹⁴ These parliamentary leaders can set the agenda, choose the path of proposed legislation, determine the sequence of voting on different proposals and designate procedures for voting.⁹⁵ Also, majorities use a vote of no-confidence to keep government policy in line with the majority party views. Generally, the prime minister, as head of the government, serves as long as he or she keeps the support of a majority of deputies in the parliament.⁹⁶

A critical component of agenda control in democratic systems is the manner in which the majority acts as the dominant agenda setter while still allowing the minority a voice in the process. If a parliament has a single and disciplined majority party, the need for compromise or tradeoffs greatly decreases. This allows the majority to make decisive policy but also increases the risk that political outcomes may be unfair to minorities.⁹⁷ In a report on

⁹³ At the most basic level, the majority party uses the quorum rule to determine when a legislative session is held by controlling whether or not their party members attend. For more on the effect of the quorum rule, see Bjørn Erik Rasch, "Parliamentary Voting Procedures," in *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, ed. Herbert Döring (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag; St. Martin's Press, 1995), 497.

⁹⁴ Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1993); Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*. For an extensive evaluation of western European parliaments, see Jenny and Muller, "Presidents of Parliament: Neutral Chairmen or Assets of the Majority."

⁹⁵ Jenny and Muller, "Presidents of Parliament: Neutral Chairmen or Assets of the Majority."

⁹⁶ This threshold can vary but the most common is an absolute majority.

⁹⁷ Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, "The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes," in *Presidents, Parliaments, and Policy*, ed. Stephan Haggard and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Political Economy of*

parliamentary reform, Huber (2002) notes that majority rule plays a central role in determining if a legislature can achieve the delicate balance between the “two basic contradictory principles of parliament: the right of the majority to govern and the right of the minority to be heard.”⁹⁸ In Moldova, the exclusive use of majority rule by nationalistic Popular Front leaders pushed the Gagauz to secede. Conversely, an inclusive-minded Agrarian Party majority adopted landmark autonomy legislation, which successfully settled the Gagauz question.

VETO PLAYERS

The ability of the majority to produce outcomes also depends on the relative strength of the opposition. Those legislative actors whose support is necessary to pass legislative proposals successfully are called ‘veto players,’ ‘veto actors,’ or ‘coalition leaders.’⁹⁹ The strength of veto players on a particular issue generally depends on two key characteristics: first, the ideological distance between the veto players and agenda setters; and second, the number of veto players on the issues.¹⁰⁰ The number of veto players is determined largely by the constitutional divisions of power, electoral systems, and the rules and procedures which govern legislatures.¹⁰¹

Specific institutional rules, such as the allocation of committee chairs, can allow minority parties to become veto players and affect policy outcomes.¹⁰² In Moldova,

Institutions and Decisions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 63. To appreciate an “ethnic” minority, I employ the work of Döring, ed., *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*; Dennis C. Mueller, *Public Choice II: A Revised Edition of Public Choice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, 2 vols. (Chatham, N.J: Chatham House, 1987).

⁹⁸ Anne Huber, “Reform of Parliament,” *Constitutional and Parliamentary Information* (1994), 138.

⁹⁹ Paul Chaisty, *Legislative Politics and Economic Power in Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 8; Cox and McCubbins, “The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes,” 24-25.

¹⁰⁰ Eduardo Aleman and George Tsebelis, “Presidents, Parties, and Agenda Control in Latin America” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington D.C., September 2005), 12-20; Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*, 185-86.

¹⁰¹ Cox and McCubbins, “The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes,” 36-37; Haggard, McCubbins, and Shugart, “Conclusion: Policy Making in Presidential Systems,” 320.

¹⁰² At one time minority groups in the Finnish parliament had the ability to delay or stop bills by stipulating that one third of all deputies may leave an adopted bill in abeyance until after the next parliamentary session. See Strøm, “Parliamentary Government and Legislative Organisation,” 71.

parliamentary procedures enabled Popular Front leaders to hold on to key parliamentary leadership positions even after the Popular Front became a minority opposition party. These veto players kept the compromise Gagauz autonomy agreement off the agenda and directly contributed to a deadlocked parliament. Certain rule changes reduced the number of veto players and strengthened the Agrarian majority. As a result, the Agrarians pushed the draft autonomy law onto the parliamentary agenda for consideration by the entire body.

PARTY DISCIPLINE

Party discipline increases the likelihood that draft bills, preferred by the party leaders, are passed into law. Various institutional features allow party leaders to enforce discipline. Parliamentary rules give party leaders the option of “side payments” such as desired commission assignments to induce good behaviour from party members.¹⁰³ In European parliaments ministerial portfolios are handed out to loyal followers.¹⁰⁴ Party leaders can use recorded votes as opposed to secret ballots in order for whips to identify members who stray from the party line.¹⁰⁵ Another tool available to party leaders is the ability to remove a deputy from a party list before the upcoming election.¹⁰⁶ As Cox and McCubbins note (2005) “When party leaders have the means to impose discipline on their backbenchers, agenda control is attained by the extension of the will of the party leadership.”¹⁰⁷ In Moldova, leaders struggled to keep party discipline when attempting to pass controversial measures, especially the draft autonomy law whose difficult details were worked out in

¹⁰³ Gary W. Cox, "On the Effects of Legislative Rules," in *Legislatures: Comparative Perspectives on Representative Assemblies*, ed. Gerhard Loewenberg, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 257.

¹⁰⁴ Erik Damgaard, "How Parties Control Committee Members," in *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, ed. Herbert Döring (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag; St. Martin's Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Saalfeld, "On Dogs and Whips: Recorded Votes," in *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, ed. Herbert Döring (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag; St. Martin's Press, 1995), 530.

¹⁰⁶ Cox and McCubbins, "The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes," 37.

¹⁰⁷ Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*, 19.

committee. Agrarian party leaders were able to adopt autonomy legislation after gaining sufficient party discipline to overcome veto players and uncommitted backbenchers.

This review of the comparative legislative studies literature builds a framework that will be used to examine Moldova's handling of the Gagauz. The framework enables the exploration of several fundamental questions: which parliamentary rules encouraged or discouraged the Gagauz to participate in the political process? Which factors constrained Moldova's most powerful political leaders from turning their preferences into political outcomes? How did institutional changes in the electoral law, parliamentary rules, and the constitution impact on Moldova's ability to deal with Gagauz demands for autonomy? Answers to these questions help to establish causal relationships which explain how institutional arrangements influenced legislative decision-making.

Thesis Structure

Using this theoretical framework for the thesis, I examine how Soviet and Moldovan political actors wielded agenda control to produce legislative outcomes in response to Gagauz demands. The narrative is structured as follows. **Chapter One** details historical and modern Gagauz preferences. It lays out how minority groups seek to protect their identity and explains why the Gagauz narrowly focused on territorial autonomy. **Chapter Two** describes the Soviet regime and how Gorbachev's reforms allowed Gagauz demands to gain an audience on the all-union stage. It considers the institutional features which diffused agenda control and created a state-sanctioned commission to consider the merits of autonomy for the Gagauz.

The following three chapters focus on the three outcomes: separation, stalemate, and settlement. **Chapter Three** examines the effects of the 1990 parliamentary elections on Moldova's institutions, and how Moldova's handling of Gagauz demands resulted in the Gagauz separation from Moldova. **Chapter Four** investigates the stalemate caused by veto

players and weak parties which hindered the ability of Moldova's leadership to find a compromise with the Gagauz. **Chapter Five** reveals how significant changes in Moldova's institutions were necessary for political leaders to accommodate the Gagauz effectively, and it details parliament's efforts to pass the negotiated settlement. **Chapter Six** addresses alternative explanations, most significantly the impact of Turkey's actions on Moldova as a patron state of the Gagauz.

The dilemma which faced Moldova and the Gagauz is not unique. Valuable lessons can be learned from the settlement they negotiated. Observers of post-cold war politics are keenly aware of the numerous self-determination movements worldwide.¹⁰⁸ Governments continue to struggle to accommodate national minorities.¹⁰⁹ This narrative helps scholars and practitioners grasp the "role of alternative democratic institutions in building stable democracies."¹¹⁰ Understanding the institutional arrangements needed to create autonomous regions is invaluable for the many states and international organizations looking to construct peaceful solutions of their own.

¹⁰⁸ One source catalogues almost 300 cases of ethnic separatism and irredentism that have occurred since 1945. See Christopher Hewitt and Tom Cheetham, *Encyclopedia of Modern Separatist Movements* (Santa Barbara, Denver, and Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2000).

¹⁰⁹ John Coakley, *The Territorial Management of Ethnic Conflict*, 2nd rev. and expanded ed. (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

¹¹⁰ Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, 2 vols. (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 62.

CHAPTER 1: GAGAUZ PREFERENCES

1.1 Introduction

In his study of Soviet nationalities, Beissinger (2002) argues that the Gagauz did not have the necessary characteristics to mobilize successfully during the Soviet Union's nationalist reawakening.¹ He contends that they were too small, too rural, and too inexperienced as they had never been an independent state. When comparing the forty nationalities which did mobilize, the Gagauz were the only nationality without any form of ethnoterritorial structure to support its demands. Likewise, another study showed that it was very difficult to create territorial autonomy in the Soviet Union for those groups which had not previously enjoyed it.² With these factors weighing against a favourable outcome, why was the Gagauz mobilization successful?

In this chapter, I describe how Gagauz elite transformed their desire to protect the Gagauz identity into demands for territorial autonomy. The demands then developed into a political movement which led to a declaration of their own autonomous republic. I examine how political structures were formed which entrenched Gagauz demands and bounded the settlement options available to Moldova. While this description of Gagauz preferences explains how the Gagauz mobilized, it only partially explains why the Gagauz were able to reach a settlement with Moldova in 1994. The remainder of the explanation is found in the following chapters which examine Moldova and how its institutions handled Gagauz demands.

I argue that Gagauz preferences for political recognition emerged in concert with other mobilizing nationalities. The Gagauz demanded territorial autonomy and held this position throughout the negotiations for a settlement. When the Soviet Union disappeared

¹ Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, 198-226.

² Pål Kolstø, "Territorial Autonomy as a Minority Rights Regime in Post-Communist Societies," in *Can Liberal Pluralism Be Exported?*, ed. Will Kymlicka and Magdalena Opalski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

and the Republic of Moldova emerged, the Gagauz goal for autonomy remained the same. This understanding of consistent Gagauz preferences is essential in order to focus on the institutional factors which influenced the political outcomes of the period.

1.2 Framework

Gagauz preferences developed into specific demands and created a political movement within the Soviet Union. These demands interacted with the Soviet and Moldovan regimes to produce certain outcomes: a *separation* of the Gagauz from Moldova; a *stalemate* in negotiations between the two sides; and then a *settlement* on a form of autonomy for the Gagauz within Moldova. The critical argument I offer is this: if Gagauz preferences for territorial autonomy did not change during the struggle with Moldova, other institutional factors must have caused the varied political outcomes which occurred from 1988 to 1995.

To appreciate the formation of Gagauz demands, I look at which factors influenced the Gagauz to choose territorial autonomy. I review the wide range of alternative political solutions that minority nationalities have used to protect themselves and their cultural heritage. I then assess the factors in the Soviet Union which impacted on Gagauz preferences. With this background, I explain why the Gagauz preferred one particular solution for their self-determination movement.

1.2.1 Spectrum of Preferences

To understand why nature of Gagauz demands for autonomy—what they were and why they were chosen—it is necessary to appreciate the options available. Theoretically, a wide range of possibilities existed. Figure 1.1 shows the methods that can be used to protect the rights of minority nationalities.

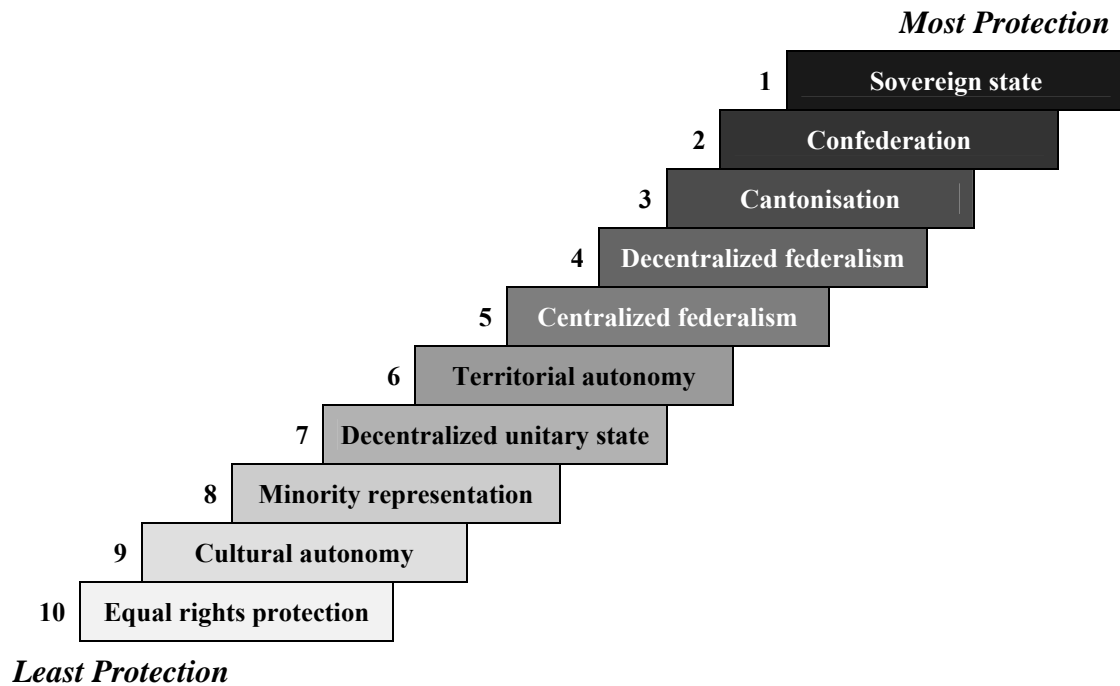


Figure 1.1: Spectrum of Protection for Minority Nationalities³

The ladder scale can be grouped into three different categories: demands which require international recognition (1); demands which require territorial divisions (2-7); and demands which only require legal protections (8-10). Another categorization shows that the bottom half of the scale can be implemented by a unitary state, whereas the top half requires some formal or constitutional separation of powers between the periphery and the centre. I summarize each option briefly.

³ McGarry and O'Leary (1993) offer their own taxonomy of institutional responses to manage minority ethnic groups. It includes four methods for eliminating differences which are not applicable to my focus on accommodation. See John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, "Introduction: The Macro-Political Regulation of Ethnic Conflict," in *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation: Case Studies of Protracted Ethnic Conflicts*, ed. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary (London; New York: Routledge, 1993a). For additional analyses, see John Coakley, "Approaches to the Resolution of Ethnic Conflict: The Strategy of Non-Territorial Autonomy," *International Political Science Review* 15, no. 3 (1994); Yash Pal Ghai, "Constitutional Asymmetries: Communal Representation, Federalism, and Cultural Autonomy," in *The Architecture of Democracy*, ed. Andrew Reynolds, *Oxford Studies in Democratization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Donald Rothchild and Caroline A. Hartzell, "Security in Deeply Divided Societies: The Role of Territorial Autonomy," in *Identity and Territorial Autonomy in Plural Societies*, ed. William Safran and Ramón Maíz Suárez (London: F. Cass, 2000).

The most severe demand would be complete secession in order to create a separate sovereign state, as happened with East Timor's secession from Indonesia.⁴ A step below is a form of confederation, which has existed in Serbia and Montenegro.⁵ Step three uses the Swiss paradigm of Cantonisation, which devolves power downward to the smallest regional level in recognition of ethnic differences.

The next two steps are forms of federalism: decentralized and centralized. Decentralized federalism is taken from Lijphart's notion of consociational democracy. It uses power-sharing strategies based on ethnic pluralism and healthy doses of self-government, such as in Belgium.⁶ Centralized federalism is a more rigid structure which allocates control of certain competencies to the central government and gives other authority to the constituent groups or divisions (such as US states or German Länder).⁷ Both types of federalism require the centre to give up or share significant power. They can also devolve power asymmetrically to ethnically-based territories, such as when Puerto Rico petitioned the United States for additional local governance.

In the bottom half of the scale (6-10), territorial autonomy is the strongest structure to secure protection for a group within a centralized, unitary state.⁸ With territorial autonomy, the centre bestows specific authority to a designated region, usually based on the demographic feature of an ethnic group or geographic feature of a historic homeland.⁹ These regions are given (often constitutionally entrenched) structures for the exercise of their autonomy, which may include a law-making body or simply an appointed governor. Most

⁴ East Timor is officially known as the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

⁵ This form is difficult to maintain as manifested by Montenegro's May 2006 referendum to break its union with Serbia.

⁶ Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1977), 41-44.

⁷ John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, eds., *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation: Case Studies of Protracted Ethnic Conflicts* (London: Routledge, 1993b), 31; Rothchild and Hartzell, "Security in Deeply Divided Societies: The Role of Territorial Autonomy," 261.

⁸ The point on varieties of centralism is made in Coakley, *The Territorial Management of Ethnic Conflict*.

⁹ Rothchild and Hartzell, "Security in Deeply Divided Societies: The Role of Territorial Autonomy," 259.

forms of territorial autonomy have an asymmetric feature, which allows the region more or different powers than afforded other regions, such as in Finland's Åland Islands.¹⁰

In decentralized unitary states, power is held centrally, but granted to local units symmetrically with a territorial administrative plan. As seen in Sweden, regions are granted certain realms of authority which do not drastically differ between each other.

The final three types of protection (8-10) are not territorial demands but rather political or legal guarantees on behalf of a certain minority group. Minority representation (or communal representation) ensures representation of a minority group through the electoral system or through a system of separate representation as in India.¹¹ Cultural autonomy secures collective rights for a group. It can be very structured with councils or cultural affairs ministries which assume responsibility for certain competencies like education. Such councils exist in Belgium for Dutch, French, and German language speakers.¹² Equal rights protection is probably the least invasive demand which ensures legal protection of minority groups simply through legislation. However, the capacity for controversy and violence exists, as evidenced by conflicts over civil rights legislation in the US during the 1960s.

The ladder scale illustrates the theoretical options that were available to the Gagauz and sets the context for Moldovan proposals. Of the various types of territorial and non-territorial protection for minority nationalities, most of the options require a degree of constitutional restructuring of state power or specifically worded legislation. The next section considers how Gagauz demands evolved.

¹⁰ The vital role of asymmetry is supported by studies on Spain and Czechoslovakia. Initially, the designated regions resisted federalization as they wanted to maintain the distinct nature of their group. See Audrey Brassloff, "Spain: The State of the Autonomies," in *Federalism and Nationalism*, ed. Murray Greensmith Forsyth (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1989), 35; Kymlicka, "Is Federalism a Viable Alternative to Secession," 132.

¹¹ Ghai, "Constitutional Asymmetries: Communal Representation, Federalism, and Cultural Autonomy," 144-53.

¹² Ibid, 163-68.

1.2.2 Formation of Gagauz Preferences

With an understanding of the range of alternatives available, it is essential to address what factors influenced the formation of Gagauz preferences. Did the Gagauz explore a variety of options? Why or why not? Rational choice assumes that political actors will peruse goals rationally, seeking those which will maximize their interests or minimize their costs.¹³ The rational actors involved in creating new political structures will seek a wide range of options and attempt to increase the number of alternatives.¹⁴ Rational Choice Institutionalism recognizes that past institutions may influence preference choices and at a minimum constrain choices made by political actors.¹⁵ This view accepts the important role of institutions as “the state is not only affected by society but also affects it.”¹⁶

From this perspective, minority nationalities can be expected to seek a form of protection similar to the framework with which they are familiar. A regional study of the Soviet Union showed the influential impact of the state on preference formation. Kolstø's (2001) study of minority nationalities in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe showed that elite familiarity with the use of territorial autonomy resulted in their preference for this solution to protect minority rights and entitlements.¹⁷ His study found that because minority nationalities were granted rights in a territorial form, this is what minority groups worked to realize. The Soviet Union used four separate institutional structures to achieve this aim: an

¹³ In personal correspondence, Dr. Edward Morgan-Jones provided helpful insight into the role of rationality and preference formation. For works by original theorists, see Kenneth Joseph Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values*, Monograph (Yale University. Cowles Foundation for Research in Economics) ; 12 (London: Wiley, Chapman & Hall, 1951); Ken Binmore, Ariel Rubinstein, and Asher Wolinsky, "The Nash Bargaining Solution in Economic Modelling," *The RAND Journal of Economics* 17, no. 2 (1986); Peter C. Ordeshook and Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Political Equilibrium* (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1982); William Riker, "Implications from the Disequilibrium of Majority Rule for the Study of Institutions," *American Political Science Review* 74, no. 2 (1980); Kenneth A. Shepsle, "Institutional Arrangements and Equilibrium in Multidimensional Voting Models," *American Journal of Political Science* 23, no. 1 (1979).

¹⁴ George Tsebelis, *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics* (Berkeley ; Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), 9-10.

¹⁵ Riker, "Implications from the Disequilibrium of Majority Rule for the Study of Institutions," 445; Shepsle, "Institutional Arrangements and Equilibrium in Multidimensional Voting Models," 57.

¹⁶ March and Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics*, 17.

¹⁷ Kolstø, "Territorial Autonomy as a Minority Rights Regime in Post-Communist Societies."

independent republic, an autonomous republic, an autonomous region (*oblast*), and a national, later renamed autonomous county (*okrug*). These institutional arrangements conditioned Soviet elites from national minorities to place a territorial form of autonomy “high on the list of demands.”¹⁸

Within the Soviet Union, the Gagauz were comparable in size to other groups who enjoyed territorial autonomy in the form of autonomous republics, *oblasts*, or *okrugs*. Table 1.1 compares the Gagauz to the twelve smallest nationalities which had an autonomous status within the Soviet Union.

Table 1.1 Autonomous Regions and Nationalities in the Soviet Union (1989)¹⁹

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Total population in USSR</i>	<i>Nationality's percentage of region's population</i>	<i>Percentage of nationality living in autonomous region</i>
Ingush*	237,438	12.9%	68.9%
Tuvins*	206,629	64.3%	96.0%
Gagauz²⁰	197,768	47.0%	68.5%
Kalmyks*	173,821	45.3%	84.2%
Karachai**	155,936	31.0%	82.6%
Komi-Permyaks***	152,060	60.1%	62.7%
Karelians*	130,929	10.0%	60.3%
Adygei**	124,826	22.1%	76.5%
Abkhaz*	105,308	17.3%	86.1%
Balkars*	85,126	9.4%	82.9%
Khakass**	80,328	11.1%	78.3%
Altai**	70,777	31.0%	83.5%
Cherkess**	52,363	9.7%	76.8%

*Autonomous republic ** Autonomous *oblast* ***Autonomous *okrug*

¹⁸ Ibid, 203-05.

¹⁹ Ann Sheehy, "Ethnographic Developments and the Soviet Federal System," in *Soviet Federalism: Nationalism and Economic Decentralisation*, ed. Alastair McAuley (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), 58-59.

²⁰ These numbers are based on five *raions* in southern Moldova (Ceadâr-Lunga, Comrat, Vulcăneşti, Basarabyska, and Tarakliya). See FBIS, "Do the Gagauz Really Live So Poor?," *Moldova Suverana*, (30 August 1990), translated in FBIS JPRS Report, JPRS-UPA-90-059, 16 October 1990f.

In Table 1.1, nationalities are arranged in order of population size based on the 1989 census of the USSR. A third column shows what percentage the particular nationality makes up of the entire population within the autonomous region. Some groups such as the Cherkess have a relatively small presence (9.7%) while the Tuvins make up an absolute majority of their region (64.3%). The last column shows what percentage of the Soviet population of that particular nationality lives within the autonomous region.

From these data, the Gagauz were larger than ten other Soviet nationalities which had an autonomous republic, oblast, or okrug designated for their nationality. The Gagauz also made up half of the total population within the five *raions* in southern Moldova, which represented nearly 70% of the total Gagauz nationality in the Soviet Union. Predictably early Gagauz nationalists compared the Gagauz to groups on this list and complained that “the Gagauz are the only nation in the Soviet Union with a population of around 200 thousand which lives compactly in a single territory and has not to date enjoyed autonomy.”²¹ Of particular note was the Abkhaz, located just across the Black Sea from Moldova in the republic of Georgia. A leading Gagauz intellectual, writing in a Soviet-wide academic journal, specifically questioned why the Abkhazians enjoyed a higher status than the Gagauz when they had a smaller population.²² These other groups, regardless of the historical background, gave a point of reference as to what type of structure the Gagauz were entitled. With the liberalization of public debate, the Gagauz pressed to understand why they were unique in their status of having no form of territorial autonomy. Gagauz elite familiarity with this form of minority rights protection influenced why the Gagauz chose the particular solution of territorial autonomy among the wider range of protections.²³

²¹ This from a pamphlet written by Gagauz nationalist, Leonid Dobrov, in 1985. See translation in Demirdirek, “(Re)Making of a Place and Nation: Gagauzia in Moldova” 166.

²² FBIS, “The CPSU Platform and Reality,” *Obshchestvennyye Nauki*, (7 February 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-115-S, 14 June 1990c.

²³ Kolstø, “Territorial Autonomy as a Minority Rights Regime in Post-Communist Societies,” 205.

In the Soviet Union, there were other nationalities numbering over 100,000 who lacked any designated autonomous region. These included groups like the Soviet Germans, Poles, and Bulgarians which were considered diasporas separated from their native homelands outside of the Soviet Union. In contrast, the native homeland of the Gagauz was considered to be within the Soviet Union. Only two other groups of significant size (over 100,000) shared this distinction as nations without a state or autonomous region: the Crimean Tatars and Meskhetian Turks. Both the Tatars and Turks had been deported from their homelands during the ‘Great Patriotic War’ and were not repatriated as part of Khrushchev’s reforms in the late 1950s.²⁴ As the Gagauz raised the issue of autonomy, similar demands were made by both the Crimean Tatars and Meskhetian Turks.²⁵

While the Gagauz elite were conditioned to seek a form of territorial autonomy, they also argued that other solutions had already been tried and had failed. For example, the Soviet Union had granted the Gagauz a form of cultural autonomy from 1957-1961. Stepan Bulgar, a Gagauz intellectual who led the early drive for autonomy, stated that this experience had taught the Gagauz to “not believe in cultural autonomy” because it did not prove valuable in practice.²⁶ Another Gagauz leader from Ceadâr-Lunga disparagingly compared cultural autonomy to “when one is permitted to get down from a tree, dance a little and get back into it.”²⁷ He, like many other Gagauz elite, concluded that, “The cultural autonomy model was not suitable for us.”²⁸ From the Gagauz perspective, the Soviet Union had proved that territorial autonomy was what worked in practice. The next section details their struggle to attain it.

²⁴ Graham Smith, "Nationalities Policy from Lenin to Gorbachev," in *The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union*, ed. Graham Smith (London: Longman, 1990), 7.

²⁵ One example is at the 1989 Congress of People’s Deputies. See *Izvestiya*, "S"ezd Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR (Zasedanie Dvenadtsatoe)," 10 June 1989f.

²⁶ FBIS, "The Gagauz Question?," *Sovetskaya Moldaviya*, (1 November 1989), translated in FBIS Daily Report, 1989a.

²⁷ Ivan Ivanovich Ceban, Personal Interview with Author in Comrat, 25 November 2005.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

1.3 Gagauz Preferences

I argue that Gagauz preferences developed early, were focused, and remained consistent. To explain how this happened I break up the development of Gagauz preferences into four phases of progression. The first phase was the public emergence of preferences, expressed by elites who took advantage of institutional changes which followed Gorbachev's perestroika reforms. The second phase was the narrowing of preferences into specific demands which were expressed by petition drives, congresses, and commissions. The third phase was the mobilization of the public when demands merged into a political movement of elites *and* workers. The final phase was the entrenchment of demands through the creation of political structures such as elected lawmaking bodies. This four stage process illustrates how preferences evolved quickly and honed in narrowly on one solution: territorial autonomy.

1.3.1 Stage One: *The Public Emergence of Preferences*

The first stage of preference development began as Gagauz elites, mostly scholars in academia, adopted a sense of responsibility to protect the Gagauz identity. These influential individuals led the discussions which developed among the population. One of these groundbreaking elites, Denis Tanasoglu, personally influenced the next generation of Gagauz who would make political demands in Moldova.

Tanasoglu (1922-) was credited with lifting the Gagauz people to a new level of cultural development.²⁹ After being educated in Romania (before World War II) and Russia (after World War II) he returned to Moldova and the Chişinău Pedagogical Institute to finish his studies. In the 1950s, he and two other scholars developed a modernised version of the Gagauz written language using the Cyrillic alphabet. In 1957 the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR adopted a law making the alphabet official. His work ushered in a "new

²⁹ The following biographical information on Tanasoglu is from Stepan Bulgar, *Gagauzskie Sud'by* (Chişinău: Tsentral'naia Tipografiia, 2003), 106-10.

epoch of Gagauz national culture.”³⁰ He edited and published a collection of Gagauz folklore and poetry in 1959, published the first novel in the Gagauz language (*Uzun Kervan* or “The Long Caravan”) in 1985, and wrote two original Gagauz plays which were viewed by “thousands.”³¹ Though he made a substantial contribution to Gagauz literature, Tanasoglu’s lasting legacy was how he inspired his students to carry the work forward.

Tanasoglu’s students caught his passion to develop Gagauz culture and to expand the rights of the people within the Soviet Union. One student, Dimitrii Kara Choban (1933-1986), opened the Beşalma Museum of History and Ethnography in the Gagauz village of Beşalma in 1966 which was later given the status of a state museum in 1972.³² Using a collection of personal effects, the museum represented the unique identity of the Gagauz people, with a distinct history, dress, textiles, art, literature, and culture. Kara Choban, the village librarian, had initially been given a room for the museum by the village *Soviet* but by 1975 it was moved into its own building. By then, there was another ethnographic museum in Comrat and another in the Bolgrad region of Ukraine, but the “most renowned” was Kara Choban’s in the small village of Beşalma which had been featured in the Russian-language Comrat newspaper *Leninskoe Slovo*.³³ Kara Choban’s work typified the gradual development of the Gagauz culture carried forward by Tanasoglu’s students during the two decades prior to Gorbachev.

Tanasoglu influenced other young Gagauz students who later directed the initial political ambitions of the Gagauz. One of the original members of the first Gagauz political organization remembered how Tanasoglu, like a spiritual father, gathered together his students in 1968, during the events in Czechoslovakia, to speak of Gagauz autonomy.³⁴

³⁰ Ibid, 109.

³¹ Ibid, 110.

³² Ibid, 138; Demirdirek, “(Re)Making of a Place and Nation: Gagauzia in Moldova” 169.

³³ Demirdirek, “(Re)Making of a Place and Nation: Gagauzia in Moldova” 169.

³⁴ Vladimir Kapanji, Personal Interview with Author in Ceadâr-Lunga, 16 September 2004.

These students were the future leaders of the modern Gagauz political movement, *Gagauz Halkı*.³⁵ One of these leaders, Vladimir Kapanji, a medical doctor by profession, was elected as a deputy of the Moldavian SSR Parliament from 1990-1994 and became a member of the parliament's presidium. Another was Maria Marunovich, who later earned a PhD in History and became the senior researcher of the Gagauz department in the Moldavian SSR Academy of Sciences.³⁶ The department was created in 1987 and headed by another former Tanasoglu student, Stepan Kuroglo, who also helped form *Gagauz Halkı* and became a member of parliament from 1990-1994.³⁷ These were the standard bearers for the Gagauz awakening of the 1980s.

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT AUTONOMY

This new generation of educated Gagauz elite took notice that the Soviet Union had done very little to preserve and foster Gagauz culture. The state had not developed their literature, conducted ethnographic studies, or introduced Gagauz language courses in schools. There was a strong perception that the region as a whole was economically underdeveloped due to state policies which took Gagauz products like grapes and tobacco to other regions for processing and profit. Culturally, economically, and politically, the Gagauz and the southern region of Moldova appeared to be neglected and even mistreated.

Higher education gave these new Gagauz leaders the platform from which to voice their concerns. They became members of the intelligentsia and considered themselves the vanguard of the people and their culture. As artists, writers, and workers within the Academy of Sciences, they were fulfilling their responsibilities by looking out for and protecting the rights of a unique and valuable people. A general feeling emerged that the Gagauz people

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Bulgar, *Gagauzskie Sud'by*, 149-51.

³⁷ Ibid, 165-67.

required more control of their own destiny. This was the beginning of the Gagauz self-determination movement.³⁸

Using the cultural platform the Gagauz elite made their arguments difficult for the Soviet bureaucrats to dismiss. These elites were not political leaders seeking additional resources. They could not be easily intimidated or bought off. Instead, they spoke as recognized experts in their fields. The scope of public discourse was carefully guarded during the conservative atmosphere of the early 1980s, but with the emergence of Gorbachev's reforms, the temperature of the debate greatly increased. I examine how this warming process developed.

As noted, Gagauz autonomy was discussed by Tanasoglu with his students in 1968. One of his students, Kara Choban, saw his museum in Beşalma shut down in 1983 when authorities in Comrat disapproved of the content on display. In an effort to refute the accusation of being a nationalist, Kara Choban wrote:

“.... False rumours arose around the fine aspirations. A certain idea of ‘Gagauz autonomy’ is cultivated and then without any foundation it is ascribed to the men of science and culture. People very far from such thoughts are slandered and compromised....”³⁹

His rejection in 1983 of being involved with promoting “Gagauz autonomy” was an indicator that a discussion on autonomy had already begun. It was probable that Tanasoglu's conversations about the deserved rights of the Gagauz had continued to percolate. The letter also confirmed that the idea of Gagauz autonomy was not popular with the state authorities.

³⁸ Feelings of self-determination are not unique to the Gagauz or to the former Soviet Union. In a 1967 *World Politics* article, Walker Connor accurately predicted that there was “considerable reason to expect a further proliferation of self-determination movements.” See reprinted article in Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5-27. Western political theorist David Miller calls national self-determination a fundamental right which allows groups and specifically nationalities to express their cultural traditions politically. See David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

³⁹ Demirdirek, “(Re)Making of a Place and Nation: Gagauzia in Moldova” 164.

The reality of the 'autonomy discussion' was repeated in a meeting in Chişinău held on 29 September 1987 with Communist party activists. One Gagauz woman, S.V. Azman, a leader of *Gigant*, a vegetable *Kolkhoz* brigade in the Vulcăneşti region, stated:

"My fellow brigade members and I cannot understand the position of certain Gagauz cultural figures who believe that our people have been frustrated in receiving its rights, who demand 'justice'—**the establishment of autonomy for the Gagauz**. I would like to say that in general they do not know about our life, and are only trying to gain notoriety, or create a scandal if you will, at our expense (bold added)."⁴⁰

This refutation of autonomy can be viewed as an expression of the official view that autonomy for the Gagauz was not to be supported.⁴¹ Concurrently, it acknowledges that discussions about autonomy existed among certain segments of the Gagauz population before September 1987. When the brigade leader accuses "certain Gagauz cultural figures" as "trying to gain notoriety," such a specific rebuke gives additional reason to assume that Gagauz discussions were well known and unsettling to Soviet officials.

One of these cultural figures may have been the young Gagauz nationalist Leonid Dobrov. While considered a radical or possibly even mentally unstable, he is recognized as one of the modern agitators for Gagauz autonomy.⁴² In 1982 while still a student, he organized a letter writing campaign to various Soviet leaders demanding that Gagauz language classes be made available.⁴³ Three years later he staged a one-man demonstration in front of the Chinese embassy in Moscow to demand autonomy for the Gagauz, was

⁴⁰ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Vospityvat Patriotov-Internatsionalistov," 4, 3 October 1987b.

⁴¹ *Sovetskaya Moldaviya* was the official government newspaper of the MSSR. This conclusion is also reached by A. Sheehy, "Cultural Concessions but No Autonomy for Gagauz," *Radio Liberty Research Bulletin*, RL 456, no. 87 (1987), 2-3.

⁴² While this accusation was often made against dissidents, I make this characterization from interviews with Gagauz leaders and a discussion with Mr. Dobrov himself.

⁴³ FBIS, "Will 'Traitors' Save the Peace? Split in Gagauz Movement Is Becoming More Apparent," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (20 June 1991), translated in FBIS JPRS Report, FBIS-USR-91-015, 19 July 1991j. This activity was recalled by Gagauz Halkı activists in an interview in 1989.

arrested, and then sent to Dnepropetrovsk mental institution.⁴⁴ Dobrov distributed a pamphlet which read as follows (punctuation and capitalization kept as in the original):

“THE TIME HAS ALREADY COME WHEN IT IS ABSOLUTELY
INDISPENSABLE FOR THE GAGAUZ TO HAVE THEIR OWN AUTONOMOUS
REPUBLIC.

WHY SHOULD THE GAGAUZ HAVE AUTONOMY?

THE GAGAUZ are the only nation in the Soviet Union with a population of around
200 thousand which lives compactly in a single territory and has not to date enjoyed
autonomy....”⁴⁵

Dobrov’s actions were known by other cultural activists who gradually became more emboldened.⁴⁶ These activists began to make progress on the Gagauz issue by petitioning Soviet institutions to effect change.

GOVERNMENT POLICY: ACTION AND RESPONSE

On 8 October 1985, the Central Committee of the Moldavian Communist Party adopted a resolution entitled, “On Developing the Socio-Political and Labour Activeness of the Population of Gagauz and Bulgarian Nationalities.”⁴⁷ In the Archive of the Social-Political Organizations of the Republic of Moldova in Chişinău, the results of the 1985 Central Committee resolution were well documented.⁴⁸ In 1986 alone, over 35 separate reports were filed with the Central Committee from various organizations across Moldova

⁴⁴ Demirdirek, “(Re)Making of a Place and Nation: Gagauzia in Moldova”; FBIS, “Will ‘Traitors’ Save the Peace? Split in Gagauz Movement Is Becoming More Apparent.”

⁴⁵ Demirdirek, “(Re)Making of a Place and Nation: Gagauzia in Moldova” 166.

⁴⁶ This is manifest by comments made by Gagauz leaders in a 1989 interview. See Bill Keller, “A Soviet Mouse Is Roaring, Hoping to Become a Republic,” *New York Times*, 7 August 1989.

⁴⁷ PARM, *K Voprosy Izucheniia Gagauzskogo Iazyka V Obshcheobrozofatel'nykh Shkolakh C Kontingentom Ychashchikhsia Gagauzskoi Natsional'nosti*, signed by S.G Mustyatse, Ministerstvo narodnogo obrazovaniia Moldavskoi SSR, 7 Dec 1989a. This was publicly mentioned by P. F. Tanurkov, secretary of the party organization of the Kiryutyanskaya Secondary School No 2 in Chadyr-Lungskiy Raion at the 29 September 1987 meeting of Communist party activists held in Chişinău. See Sovetskaya Moldaviya, “Vospityvat Patriotov-Internatsionalistov,” 4.

⁴⁸ One archival record was filled with responses by MSSR state agencies to this October 1985 resolution.

reporting the progress on implementing the decree to develop the Gagauz and Bulgarian nationalities in Moldova.⁴⁹ Thirteen reports were filed in January 1987 alone.⁵⁰ These organizations consisted of state agencies and commercial enterprises. State agencies included the republic-level Office of Agitation and Propaganda and local groups such as the *raion*-level secretary of the Communist party in the three Gagauz cities of Comrat, Vulcănești, and Ceadâr-Lunga. Commercial enterprises included different publishing houses which reported on the number of books they had published in Gagauz or Bulgarian. The Writer's Union and Leninist Union of Youth reported on the ethnic make-up of their membership. The Ministry of Culture reported on their activities related to the Gagauz and Bulgarians. Education reports showed the impact of the resolution by listing the number of schools with Gagauz students, how many students in each class, and how many were taking Gagauz language classes. It was a thorough review of the state of the respective Gagauz and Bulgarian cultures, with each organization reporting on what was being done to improve them.

The effects of this increased state attention to Gagauz and Bulgarian cultural development were manifest in two key areas. First, it produced tangible efforts to improve the situation. Gagauz language classes were started in 1986 in selected schools in southern Moldova. Newspaper inserts were printed in Gagauz and Bulgarian in the national daily, *Literatura și Artă*; columns in Gagauz and Bulgarian were published in the local *raion* newspaper *Put k kommunism*; and local radio programming was broadcast once a month in Gagauz.⁵¹ The second effect was the unintended consequence of bringing the issue of cultural development into the public discourse. This discourse opened the way to more political topics and organized forms of discussion.

⁴⁹ Bulgarians were also concentrated in villages throughout southern Moldova.

⁵⁰ The resolution was renewed in May 1987 in order to "further" the development of the Bulgarian and Gagauz Populations. See Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Vremia Konkretnykh Deistvii," 29 December 1988b.

⁵¹ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Vospityvat Patriotov-Internatsionalistov," 4.

The boundaries of public discourse in the late 1980s changed with Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika.⁵² These new policies opened the door for critical discussion of government actions which were meant to develop Gagauz culture. At a 1987 meeting of party activists Gagauz party member, P.F. Tanurkov, questioned why the government was printing a Gagauz insert in the national daily *Literatura și Artă*. He announced the fact that there were only three subscribers of the Moldovan language newspaper in the Gagauz-majority Ceadâr-Lunga raion. He argued that it would make more sense to publish the Gagauz insert in *Sovetskaya Moldaviya* (the official government Russian daily). This change eventually happened a year later on 15 August 1988.⁵³ The insert was then published twice a month with a circulation of 55,000, as stated by Grossu, first secretary of the Moldavian CPSU Central Committee in December 1988.⁵⁴ The dialogue over policy implementation continued to expand and included more participants and an even greater range of topics.

Public criticism from the Gagauz elite was directed at the manner in which Gagauz language instruction was introduced into selected public schools. Stepan Bulgar (who would become the chairman of the Gagauz political organization, *Gagauz Halkı*) openly challenged the unsatisfactory execution of this new state policy in a 19 August 1987 article entitled *Gagauzskii Iazyk v Shkole* [Gagauz Language in School].⁵⁵ He chastised the Ministry of Education for their half-hearted efforts in preparing materials to instruct the Gagauz language course during the first year of implementation (1986-1987). For example, teachers were given one book in Gagauz of poor quality from which to teach the year-long course. He then challenged the Ministry to continue to help the Gagauz develop "national self-awareness" by

⁵² For a more comprehensive look at the effects of Gorbachev's reforms, see Chapter 19 of Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*.

⁵³ ITAR-TASS, "Sovetskaya Moldavia in Three Languages," (accessed via LexisNexis), 7 August 1988.

⁵⁴ *Sovetskaya Moldaviya*, "Vremia Konkretnykh Deistvii."

⁵⁵ S. Bulgar, "Gagauzskii Iazyk V Shkole," *Narodnoe Obrazovanie*, 19 August 1987.

preparing a course on Gagauz history.⁵⁶ Similar criticism was repeated at the Communist party activist meeting held a month later.⁵⁷ Other government organizations recommended improved language materials and additional multi-dimensional studies (social, economic, political and cultural) for the Bulgarians and Gagauz living in Moldova.⁵⁸ These criticisms in the media and Communist Party meetings opened the door for a more public discussion regarding the state of Gagauz culture.

In this first stage of Gagauz preference development two important points are clear. First, modern discussions of Gagauz autonomy began in the mid-1980s and were fostered by Gagauz elites like Denis Tanasoglu who had grown concerned about the vulnerable Gagauz identity many decades earlier. These discussions about Gagauz autonomy occurred independently of the Moldovan nationalist movement. The second is the significant impact of the 8 October 1985 Central Committee resolution to develop the Gagauz: culturally, socially, and economically. The response by state authorities, combined with Gorbachev's reforms of perestroika and glasnost opened the door to more aggressive public discussions of the Gagauz issue. As a result, elite preferences were allowed to develop much further than merely an intellectual debate.

1.3.2 Stage Two: Narrowing Preferences into Political Demands

The development of Gagauz preferences happened amidst a changing Soviet Union. As noted by Brown (1996), "In the Soviet Union prior to the second half of the 1980s, the creation of any organization without the sanction and surveillance of the state was impermissible, even if that organization was not overtly political."⁵⁹ With Gorbachev's reforms, voluntary associations known generally as 'informals' sprang up across the Soviet

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Vospityvat Patriotov-Internatsionalistov."

⁵⁸ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Sovershenstvovat' Internatsional'noe I Patriotisheskoe Vospitanie," 30 September 1987a.

⁵⁹ Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 16-17.

Union. In 1988, the freedom to act combined with a growing public awareness that the ethnic identity of some national minorities was in danger.⁶⁰ This nurtured the initial Gagauz mobilization. The institution that they used—a discussion club—was part of the rise of informal associations which led to a “deepening” and “radicalization” of public debate.⁶¹ By February 1988, *Pravda* estimated some 30,000 informals had been formed in the Soviet Union.⁶² *Gagauz Halkı* (Gagauz People) was one of these informal organizations formed by the Gagauz elite in southern Moldova. From 1988 to 1989, Gagauz Halkı took on the leading role in turning Gagauz preferences into political demands.

PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN

On 31 March 1988 the first official public meeting of Gagauz Halkı took place in Comrat, the largest city in southern Moldova, at the House of Culture.⁶³ It was publicized in the local newspaper as a “discussion club” which aimed to provide information on the Gagauz nationality—its history, culture, and literature.⁶⁴ The original executive committee included intellectuals Maria Marunovich and Stepan Bulgar as well as the head of the *raion*-level cultural department. The club used various methods to attract members. On 27 May 1988, the discussion club held its third meeting in honour of the 55-anniversary of the birth of

⁶⁰ Ronald G. Suny, "State, Civil Society, and Ethnic Cultural Consolidation in the USSR: Roots of the National Question," in *The Soviet System in Crisis*, ed. Alexander Dallin and Gail W. Lapidus (Boulder; Oxford: Westview Press, Inc., 1991).

⁶¹ Thomas F. Remington, "Towards a Participatory Politics?," in *Developments in Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics*, ed. Stephen White, et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 161; Stephen White, Graeme Gill, and Darrel Slider, *The Politics of Transition: Shaping a Post-Soviet Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 143.

⁶² White, Gill, and Slider, *The Politics of Transition: Shaping a Post-Soviet Future*, 143.

⁶³ The Gagauz had mobilized at the same general time as the Moldovan cultural group, Mateevici Circle, which organized itself among various factions also in the spring of 1988. See Crowther, "The Politics of Ethno-National Mobilization: Nationalism and Reform in Soviet Moldavia," 190; Irina Livezeanu, "Moldavia, 1917-1990: Nationalism and Internationalism Then and Now," *Armenian Review* 43, no. 2-3 (1990), 175.

⁶⁴ Comrat Museum, *Komratskii Dk: I-E Zasedanie Kluba "Gagauz Khalky" 31 Marta 1988 G. [Placard in Museum]*, Comrat, 31 March 1988b; Comrat Museum, *Zasedanie Diskussionnogo Kluba [Copy of Newspaper Article]*, Marinov, D., 5 April 1988c.

the Gagauz poet and public figure Dmitrii Kara Choban.⁶⁵ On 17 August 1988, they held another meeting to discuss the participation of the Gagauz in the Great Patriotic War and the creation of a worker's club.⁶⁶ Each meeting attracted more participants to this forum on Gagauz history, literature, and politics.

The Gagauz Halkı discussion club provided the organizational structure for Gagauz elites to exchange ideas and reach a consensus on how best to defend their interests. This new form of public discourse by the Gagauz was careful not to exceed its bounds. In an article describing the activities of the Gagauz Halkı discussion club, Marunovich began with a quotation from Gorbachev to illustrate how the club's work was a fulfilment of perestroika's mission.⁶⁷ Marunovich expressed her concern for the fragile nature of Gagauz culture, language, and history and explained that the mission of the discussion club was to raise awareness of the need for protection.⁶⁸

One front of the publicity campaign was comparing Gagauz concerns with Moldovan national issues. To gain popular support, elites connected the Gagauz plight to the controversy in Moldova over a state language. During 1988, Moldova had actively begun to debate the language issue. It was argued that too little attention had been paid to Moldovan language development. *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* published reports on the 20th Moldovan Komsomol Congress and reported that the "most serious issue addressed" was the state of Moldovan language education.⁶⁹ Another issue used by Gagauz leaders was the possible reunification of Moldova with Romania. Romania was viewed as a source of repression in the Gagauz past. Allegedly, the region had suffered under Romanian rule before the Soviet

⁶⁵ Bulgar Archives, *Ob"iavlennie Diskussionnyi Klub 'Gagauz Khalky' [Sign Announcing Public Meeting]*, 27 May 1988b; Demirdirek, "(Re)Making of a Place and Nation: Gagauzia in Moldova". Kara Choban committed suicide in 1986 due to a controversy about the government's possible involvement with his wife's murder.

⁶⁶ Bulgar Archives, *'Gagauz Khalky' Priglasaem Vsekh Zshelaiushchikh Na Svoe Chetvertoe Zasedanie [Sign Announcing Public Meeting]*, Comrat, 17 August 1988a.

⁶⁷ Comrat Museum, *Diskussionnyi Klub. Kakim Emu Byt'? [Copy of Newspaper Article]*, Marunovich, M.B., 13 October 1988a.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 123.

period.⁷⁰ Both the language law and possible reunification with Romania were powerful campaign tools for the Gagauz cause.⁷¹

As the state language issue heated up in Moldova, it became a rallying cry by which Gagauz leaders gained support from the Gagauz public.⁷² In one way, Gagauz elites supported the Moldovans' concerns about the lack of language development. This was the same argument that the Gagauz had used for their own endangered language.⁷³ At the same time, the Gagauz elites used the Moldovan language issue to excite and possibly incite support for autonomy. In the field of education, state-run businesses, and government structures, the Gagauz were concerned about being forced to learn Moldovan. In 1989, only 4 percent of Gagauz reported a fluent knowledge of Moldovan, the lowest of any ethnic group in Moldova. In contrast, a higher percentage of Gagauz considered themselves fluent in Russian as a second language more than any other non-Russian ethnic group in Moldova.⁷⁴ Consequently, any attempt to require the use of Moldovan at the expense of Russian would have a greater impact on the Gagauz than any other nationality in Moldova. The Gagauz elite effectively used the Moldovan language controversy to promote their own agenda.

In December 1988, four Gagauz activists (members of Gagauz Halkı) wrote an open letter to the Government daily, *Sovetskaya Moldaviya*, to publicize the demands of the Gagauz people. The letter responded to recent publications which had highlighted the struggles of the "state language" or Moldovan. While the Gagauz letter agreed with the essence of the Moldovan demands (called "progressive ideas"), they wrote to remind the public of the poor state of the Gagauz language—from the lack of publications, theatre and

⁷⁰ Stepan M. Topal, Petr G. Zlatov, and Nikolai P. Telpiz, Personal Interview with Author in Comrat, 14 September 2004.

⁷¹ The Gagauz Halkı reinforced widespread reservations about Romania by sponsoring a mass memorial service to remember the victims of Romania's dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu. See Bulgar Archives, *Na Plashchadi Pobedy Sostoitsia Miting I Panikhida [Sign Announcing Public Meeting]*, Comrat, 27 December 1989c.

⁷² This observation was made by several Gagauz leaders in a 1989 interview. See Keller, "A Soviet Mouse Is Roaring, Hoping to Become a Republic."

⁷³ *Sovetskaya Moldaviya*, "Radi Podlinnogo Ravnopraviia!," 25 December 1988a.

⁷⁴ King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 212-13.

broadcasting in Gagauz to lack of Gagauz students in higher education. The writers concluded with an ultimatum: if Moldovans wanted to respond to their perceived “disastrous situation” by demanding recognition of Moldovan as the state language, then the Gagauz would make their own demands—territorial autonomy for the Gagauz people and the recognition of Gagauz as the official language.⁷⁵

This bold declaration used the language issue as the pretext by which to publish their Gagauz demands. It also signified that these demands had officially taken a political form. The letter was prepared by Gagauz Halkı but individual members signed it.⁷⁶ Now, the idea had the backing of a group of well organized intellectuals who were part of a nation-wide debate on issues regarding language and culture.⁷⁷ The next step was to find the right audience who could act to implement the proposal.

POLITICAL DEMAND—AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC

The academic arena represented another front for the energetic campaign by Gagauz intellectuals to further their cause. At the same time as the December 1988 editorial to *Sovetskaya Moldaviya*, an autonomous Gagauz republic was also the subject of Soviet scholarship. Mikail Guboglo, a Gagauz intellectual in the USSR Academy of Sciences, described in a 1988 Union-wide journal article how the Gagauz lacked adequate newspapers and media programs in their language.⁷⁸ Schools simply did a “poor job of teaching” as they lacked education materials and literature. The effect was that the study of Gagauz national culture was “neglected.”⁷⁹ In Chişinău, the newly created Gagauz department of the MSSR Academy of Sciences (headed by Tanasoglu’s student Kuroglo) prepared an academic report

⁷⁵ *Sovetskaya Moldaviya*, “Radi Podlinnogo Ravnopravii!.” A similar comparison between the Popular Front and the Gagauz was made by a local journalist the following year. See *Sovetskaya Moldaviya*, “Chto Za Lozungami? Zamenki S Mitinga Narodnogo Fronta,” 11 October 1989a.

⁷⁶ From Stepan Bulgar, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 17 November 2005.

⁷⁷ One of the signatories, Leonid Dobrov, must have felt vindicated as it reiterated the demands he had made over three years earlier in Moscow.

⁷⁸ Current Digest of the Soviet Press, “Ethnic Assimilation Debated by Scholars,” *Istoria SSSR*, XL (1988).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

on inter-nationality relations in Moldova, specifically looking at the ethno-cultural development of the Gagauz.⁸⁰ The report, referencing earlier conferences between Gagauz and Bulgarian specialists held in January 1989, concluded with the recommendation that “administrative-territorial autonomy” was needed for the Gagauz, in the form of an autonomous republic or autonomous oblast.⁸¹ In July 1990, Guboglo again published a journal article in *Kommunist* documenting the “stagnation” of national minority cultures in the Moldavian SSR. He specifically highlighted the Gagauz, and asked why the problem of autonomy for the Gagauz was not being addressed by respective authorities.⁸²

After the articles and letters were published, the demand for Gagauz autonomy quickly spread. In January 1989, the Gagauz Halkı discussion club established a monthly newsletter named *Khalk*. The newsletter discussed recent proposals regarding the language law in Moldova and offered a solution to citizens in the southern region of Moldova: to start a petition for the creation of a Gagauz-Bulgarian Soviet Socialist Republic.⁸³ Dobrov, who was the probable author of the short-lived idea, invited local citizens to send their personal letters of endorsement. The next month members of Gagauz Halkı unfolded banners in front of the Central Committee of the Communist Party headquarters in Chişinău which read “We demand the creation of the Gagauz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.”⁸⁴ A few weeks later a large assembly was held in Comrat where petitions were gathered and speeches made about establishing autonomy.⁸⁵ On 23 February 1989 a delegation of about ten individuals took the petition, estimated at over 7,000 signatures, to Moscow and gave it to the Central

⁸⁰ PARM, *O Sostoianii Mezhnatsional'nykh Otnoshenii V Respublike I Predlozheniia Po Ikh Sovershenstvovaniu V Usloviakh Prerestroiki (K Voprosu O Sovremennom Etno-Kul'turnom Razvitii Gagauzov)*, signed by N.A. Demchenko and S.S. Kuroglo, undated.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² M. Guboglo, "Natsional'nye Gruppy V SSSR," *Kommunist*, no. 10 (1989).

⁸³ Comrat Museum, *Khalk [Newsletter of Gagauz Halkı]*, Comrat, January 1989b.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Comrat Museum, *Miting Na Plashchadi G. Komrata 18 Iiunia 1989 G. [Caption on Photo]*, Comrat, 18 June 1989c. Bulgar estimates that over a 1000 people attended this assembly held on 21 February 1989 in Comrat which he conducted. Bulgar, Personal Interview with Author.

Committee of the Communist Party and to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on behalf of both the Gagauz and Bulgarian causes in the region.⁸⁶ The delegation went to tell Moscow who they were and find out what the central leadership in Moscow thought of them.⁸⁷ By May 1989, Gagauz demands for autonomy were being discussed on Moscow television.⁸⁸

The Gagauz Halkı publicity campaign raised awareness of the Gagauz issue. This campaign worked on different levels in an effort to reach a wider audience. The first level was among the Gagauz people themselves. Another was in academic forums to justify why autonomy was needed for the Gagauz. Finally, the Gagauz appealed to state officials by organizing public demonstrations and making a trip to Moscow to submit petitions for recognition. Using this multi-level approach, Gagauz elites turned preferences into well articulated demands.

Three key events show the extensive audience which heard Gagauz demands. These events happened in the spring of 1989 which preceded any wide-scale mobilization in Chişinău of Moldovan nationalists. The first event was a series of April meetings organized by Gagauz Halkı in the three Gagauz communities of Comrat, Beşalma, and Ceadâr-Lunga to publicize the drive for autonomy.⁸⁹ These meetings followed a similar pattern. First, they were advertised as a public discussion of the draft Moldovan language law. This helped to attract a good crowd. Next, the organizers argued that the Gagauz needed to defend themselves against the proposed official language statutes. They suggested that this

⁸⁶ Bulgar, Personal Interview with Author; Comrat Museum, *Delegatsiia Iuga Moldavii V Moskve Po Voprosu O Neobkhozimosti Gagauzskoi Avtonomii*. [Caption of Photo of Delegation], Comrat, 23 February 1989a.

⁸⁷ Bulgar, Personal Interview with Author.

⁸⁸ FBIS, "Situation in Moldavia Featured on Moscow TV," *Moscow Television Service--Vremya*, (11 May 1989), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-89-091, 12 May 1989b.

⁸⁹ Dan Ionescu, "Soviet Moldavia: The State Language Issue," *Radio Liberty Report on the USSR* 1, no. 22 (1989), 22.

protection should be a form of territorial autonomy. Each meeting then adopted an appeal to request the creation of an autonomous republic.⁹⁰

The second event was in the capital city of Chişinău, where an organization of Russian speakers called *Edinstvo* held a rally in late April 1989. Gagauz Halkı leaders attended and pushed forward a resolution which expressed support for the Gagauz (and Bulgarians) to set up autonomous formations within the Moldavian SSR.⁹¹ The *Edinstvo* membership supported the Gagauz cause and publicly adopted the resolution.

The third event happened less than a month later. Simeon Grossu, the head of the Communist Party in Moldova, issued a Plenum report where he acknowledged the Gagauz calls for autonomy and accepted that the party, government, and other management agencies were to blame due to economic, organizational, and ideological mistakes.⁹² He called on action from all levels of the party and government.

These three events illustrate the size and scope of the campaign waged by Gagauz intellectuals in the spring of 1989. The Gagauz were winning over local villagers in southern Moldova, Russian-speaking activists in Chişinău, and even gaining sympathy for their cause with the highest levels of the Republic government. Political demands for territorial autonomy were well formulated and now well publicized.⁹³

⁹⁰ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Miting V Beshalme," 11 April 1989c.

⁹¹ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Miting V Kishineve," 25 April 1989d.

⁹² Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Doklad Pervogo Sekretaria Tsk Kpm S. K. Grossu Na XIII Plenum Tsk Kompartii Moldavii 11 Maia 1989 Goda," 12 May 1989b. Some authors argue that the Gagauz movement was engineered by communist elites to hinder the Moldovan drive to independence. See Eiki Berg and Wim van Meurs, "Borders and Orders in Europe: Limits of Nation- and State-Building in Estonia, Macedonia and Moldova," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 18, no. 4 (2002); Socor, "Gagauz Autonomy in Moldova: A Precedent for Eastern Europe?."

⁹³ Other scholars assert that the Gagauz were following in the footsteps of the the Popular Front of Moldova and have tried to portray the first half of 1989 as a united struggle with a "common goal" to bring down the Communist government. This argument claims that the August 1989 language law was the linch pin for dividing Moldova's political elite and forcing the Gagauz to split away. See King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 138-42. See also Chinn and Roper, "Territorial Autonomy in Gagauzia," 92-93; Charles King, "The Politics of Language in the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic," in *Studies in Moldovan: The History, Culture, Language and Contemporary Politics of the People of Moldova*, ed. Donald L. Dyer, *East European Monographs; No. 454* (Boulder: East European Monographs; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1996), 118; Neukirch, "Autonomy and Conflict Transformation: The Gagauz Territorial

DESTINATION: MOSCOW

With a clear vision of the political solution necessary, the Gagauz set in motion events to formalize their proposal for an autonomous Gagauz republic. Gorbachev organized the first Congress of USSR People's Deputies to be held in Moscow from 25 May to 9 June 1989. A detailed discussion of the Congress and its dealings with the Gagauz question is provided in Chapter Two. On this rare Soviet-wide stage the Gagauz wanted to present their case. As a preparatory forum for the upcoming USSR Congress of People's Deputies, a Gagauz Congress was organized.

On 24 May 1989, the first Congress of the Gagauz People's Movement was held with over 500 delegates from across the southern region of Moldova. It included participants from three different organizations from the three largest cities in the Gagauz region: Gagauz Halkı in Comrat; *Birlik* (Unity) in Ceadâr-Lunga; and *Vatan* (Homeland) in Vulcănești.⁹⁴ At the Congress, Gagauz Halkı leaders shared the stage with leaders of *Birlik* and *Vatan* to show a united front between the mobilized groups of the Gagauz people.⁹⁵ The Congress had two key effects. First, it helped turn the Gagauz Halkı discussion club into a regional organization, expanding out across southern Moldova. Second, the Congress added legitimacy to the Gagauz demands. The delegates endorsed the agenda set by the Gagauz Halkı movement which called for an autonomous Gagauz republic in the Moldavian SSR.⁹⁶ Almost immediately after the Congress, a delegation of the Gagauz Halkı executive

Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova," 108-09. However, even though the Gagauz were present at the founding Congress of the Popular Front held on May 20, 1989, the Gagauz representative at the Popular Front Congress was not the former Gagauz President (Stepan Topal) as written by King (1996) but instead a lower-level assistant to Bulgar in the Gagauz Halkı organization. Bulgar describes the initial cooperation of the Gagauz with the Popular Front as an effort by the Gagauz to draw more support for their push for autonomy.

⁹⁴ Eventually, Gagauz Halkı united *Birlik* and *Vatan* under one umbrella. This insight is from interviews with various Gagauz leaders.

⁹⁵ Bulgar publicly congratulates *Birlik* and *Vatan* for their contributions in preparing the way for the Gagauz in November. See Bulgar Archives, *Avtonomiia Gagauzskogo Naroda--Velenie Vremeni*, 12 November 1989a.

⁹⁶ Bulgar Archives, *Kopiia Telgrammy, Podannoi V Moskve Na Po "Tsentral'nyi Telegraf"*, signed by S. Bulgar, et al., 29 May 1989b; ITAR-TASS, "Gagauz People Seek Autonomy within Moldavia," (24 May 1989), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-89-104, 1 June 1989a.

committee travelled to Moscow with a mandate to make their demands heard at the USSR Congress.⁹⁷

Moscow's Congress of USSR People's Deputies was viewed with high expectations by the Gagauz. Activists lobbied delegates of the Soviet-wide Congress via telegrams. These telegrams covered a range of topics, including the first Gagauz People's Movement Congress, quotations from Lenin on national minority rights, and direct requests for support to create a Gagauz Autonomous Republic in Moldova.⁹⁸ One telegram specifically accused Moldova's leadership of wanting to hide the discrimination which had occurred against the Gagauz while another telegram congratulated Gorbachev on his success.⁹⁹ There was optimism that the all-Union Congress might endorse the Gagauz political agenda.

The trip to Moscow proved to be a significant success (discussed in Chapter Two). The Commission on Nationality Policy and Inter-ethnic Relations, within the USSR Supreme Soviet, directed the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR to investigate the proposal of creating a Gagauz autonomous oblast.¹⁰⁰ Gagauz demands for autonomy had been heard, forwarded, and the next step was to convince the authorities in Moldova to create it.

In this second stage of preference development, the mobilization of elites in informal organizations put organizational power behind elite preferences. The result was that preferences reached a wider audience and progressed into concrete political demands for a

⁹⁷ Bulgar, Personal Interview with Author; Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Otvetsvennost' Za Perestroiku," 6 July 1989f.

⁹⁸ PARM, *Pravitel'stvennaia Telegramma*, signed by Ivan Georgevich, Vulcănești, 30 May 1989i; PARM, *Pravitel'stvennaia Telegramma*; PARM, *Pravitel'stvennaia Telegramma Po Porucheniiu Trudovogo Kollektiva Brigrady Spsis Vulkaneshtskogo*, Vulcănești, 30 May 1989k; PARM, *Telegramma*, signed by G. Kalchu, Vukaneshiti, 29 May 1989n.

⁹⁹ Bulgar Archives, *Kopiia Telgrammy, Podannoi V Moskve Na Po "Tsentral'nyi Telegram"*; PARM, *Kopiia Telegrammy, Podannoi V Moskeve Na Po "Tsentral'nyi Telegram"*, signed by Stepan Bulgar, et al., 28 May 1989b.

¹⁰⁰ PARM, *Reshenie O Zaposakh I Obrashcheniiakh Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR Po Problemam Mezhnatsional'nykh Otnoshenii Postupivshikh V Adres S"Edza*, signed by G Tarazevich, Verkhovnyi Sovet Soiuz Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik: Sovet Natsional'nostei Komissii po Natsional'noi Politike i Mezhnatsional'nykh Otnosheniiam, 18 July 1989m.

Gagauz autonomous republic in southern Moldova. Gagauz intellectuals had reviewed the treatment of other national minorities and determined that a territorial solution was needed. When the Gagauz successfully pushed their political demands onto the all-Union stage in Moscow, the whole movement received a stamp of authenticity. This sanction of Gagauz demands on the all-Union stage greatly increased the political shelf life of what had earlier been the ambition of a handful of Gagauz elites in southern Moldova.

1.3.3 Stage Three: Making a Political Movement

When the Presidium of the MSSR Supreme Soviet formed a commission to study the question of Gagauz autonomy, they chose many members of the Gagauz Halkı leadership to participate.¹⁰¹ Commission members like Bulgar (head of the Gagauz Halkı), Kuroglo (head of the Gagauz department in the MSSR Academy of Sciences), and another early Gagauz Halkı executive committee member, Konstantin Taushanshi (an economist PhD), filled leadership positions in both the commission and on the Gagauz Halkı executive committee.¹⁰² Other leaders like Maria Marunovich (senior researcher of the Gagauz department in the MSSR Academy of Sciences) also participated in both the commission and Gagauz Halkı.

While the commission considered the question of Gagauz autonomy, the issue of a state language became more controversial. In August 1989 the MSSR Supreme Soviet debated whether to declare Moldovan as the state language. The contentious issues were (1) the treatment of non-Moldovan speakers and (2) whether or not the current generation would be forced to learn Moldovan. Strikes were organized to show the negative views of the non-Moldovan population regarding certain aspects of the draft law. This effort, centred largely

¹⁰¹ More detail on the activities of this commission (known as the Puşcaş Commission) is provided in the Chapter Two.

¹⁰² PARM, *Protokol Zasedaniia Komissii Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR Po Izucheniiu Zaprosov Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR I Drugikh Obrachshenii O Sozdanii Avtonomii Gagauzkogo Naroda*, Chişinău, 30 November-1 December 1989.

on the right bank of the Dnestr River on the territory of Transnistria, sought support from labour collectives in Comrat. The aim was to attract as much support from the non-Moldovan population as possible. A massive strike was conducted throughout Moldova as the Supreme Soviet debated the law.

These August 1989 strikes changed the composition of the Gagauz movement leadership. A strike committee was organized in Transnistria and in Comrat. The strike committee was made up of the heads of all the local enterprises throughout the region. Stepan Topal, who worked as the head of *PDMK-4*, a large road construction enterprise based in Comrat, was elected as the chairman of the Comrat strike committee, due to the large size of his collective.¹⁰³ He coordinated his efforts with Gagauz Halkı and in total 23 companies and institutions went on strike in Comrat joining over 200 other organizations across Moldova.¹⁰⁴ Topal's experience and leadership were instrumental in controlling the local enterprises located in southern Moldova.

Up until this point, Gagauz Halkı had led the push for autonomy. Gagauz Halkı was formed by a group of intellectuals who were not part of the local political structures. However, the strike against the state language law introduced a new dimension. Topal, who had attended previous Gagauz Halkı meetings and eventually became a member of the Gagauz Halkı council, brought economic force to the struggle and was also an experienced leader. The social movement became decidedly more political with the direct involvement of the region's enterprises and factories.¹⁰⁵ This new leadership for the Gagauz helped transform their demands into a full-fledged political movement.

¹⁰³ This information was related by Bulgar and later confirmed by Topal and Burgudi. See Bulgar, Personal Interview with Author; Ivan Burgudji, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 23 November 2005; Topal, Personal Interview with Author.

¹⁰⁴ Skvortsova, "The Cultural and Social Makeup of Moldova: A Bipolar or Dispersed Society," 183.

¹⁰⁵ Observation made by both Bulgar and Topal.

TWO PATHS: COMMISSION OR CONGRESS

The gradual decline of the Communist Party brought about a difficult choice for Gagauz leaders in the fall of 1989. Two competing paths to autonomy were available: the legislative commission or a unilateral declaration of autonomy.

For some Gagauz leaders, the best path to autonomy was still the legislative commission. The commission had been directed by the USSR Supreme Soviet, endorsed by the Presidium of the MSSR Supreme Soviet, and had the authority of the state. This group hoped that the commission would accept Gagauz findings that territorial autonomy was needed and justified. The next step would be for the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR to adopt a special legislative act to codify the creation of the Gagauz ASSR. This would be followed by a subsequent declaration of approval by the USSR Supreme Soviet. The key was for the state authorities to pass the commission's recommendation.

If the commission was going to succeed, conventional wisdom was that the commission needed the support of the local MSSR Communist Party. At a September 1989 Communist Party meeting of Moldova's Central Committee, Second Secretary Pshenichnikov emphasized that the creation of a Gagauz autonomous republic within Moldova was possible. He noted that a Gagauz autonomous entity did not contradict the CPSU platform on nationalities policy.¹⁰⁶ A few days later a Communist Party Plenum confirmed their support for Gagauz autonomy by stating that the proposal to establish an autonomous formation for the Gagauz was justified.¹⁰⁷ However, the final resolution of the Moldavian Communist Party Plenum was much less supportive. It stated that the Communist leadership of the Presidium of the Moldavian SSR Supreme Soviet, now led by Mircea

¹⁰⁶ A Dnestr autonomous entity was rejected because Russians and Ukrainians, who constituted the majority in the region, had their own national territorial formations. See Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Slovo Partii -- V Massy," 30 September 1989g.

¹⁰⁷ ITAR-TASS, "Moldavian Plenum Advocates Party Unity," (30 September 1989), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-89-189, 2 October 1989b.

Snegur, was committed to resolve the issue of Gagauz autonomy by changes in general policy which would increase the power of local soviets, provide guarantees to protect the rights of national groups, and create national-cultural centres.¹⁰⁸ Apparently, Communist moderates like Snegur, who at the time were supportive of Moldova's Popular Front, opted against autonomy for the Gagauz.¹⁰⁹ These new Party leaders rejected a national-territorial structure and advocated instead a form of minority rights protection with limited cultural autonomy. The unreliable support of the Communist Party forced the Gagauz to consider carefully their options regarding the best path to autonomy.

The fickle Communist Party and the growing power of the nationalist Popular Front convinced some Gagauz leaders that they should act unilaterally and hold their own 'Extraordinary Congress of Gagauz Deputies' to declare themselves an autonomous region. The plan for autonomy would be endorsed by the 'deputies'—Gagauz citizens who held positions of authority at all levels of government.

Gagauz leaders voted to follow a middle route. They would hold the Extraordinary Congress of Gagauz Deputies while continuing to participate in the commission.¹¹⁰ They remained hopeful that the commission would support the Gagauz cause and that the Congress might help by applying additional pressure on the state to act favourably.

EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS

On 12 November 1989, Gagauz leaders held an Extraordinary Congress of Gagauz Deputies in Comrat's House of Culture and declared the creation of a Gagauz Autonomous

¹⁰⁸ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Ob Obshchesvenno-Politicheskoi Obstanovke, Mezhnatsional'nykh Otnosheniakh I Zadachakh Partiinykh Organizatsii Respubliki, Vytakaiushchikh Iz Reshenii Sentiabr'skovo (1989 G.) Plenuma Tsk Kpss," 3 October 1989e.

¹⁰⁹ Like the other Popular Front organizations in the Baltic Republics, a central aim of the group was to increase authority and power for republic-level government and legislative bodies.

¹¹⁰ The intent of the Congress was predetermined as Kendigelian announced a few days before that the aim of the Congress was for the Gagauz to gain its autonomy. See Agence France Presse, "Gagauzi Movement to Hold First Congress 13 Nov," (11 November 1989), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-89-217, 13 November 1989. Bulgar stated that although he personally thought the Congress should wait until after the Commission presented its results, he followed the decision of the majority and convened the Congress. Bulgar, Personal Interview with Author.

Socialist Soviet Republic (ASSR) within the Moldavian SSR.¹¹¹ The Congress had 668 members, including delegates from all levels of government who represented the Gagauz population in a wide range of bodies—from the USSR Congress of People’s Deputies to village Soviets. This membership of state officials carried significantly more political weight than the Gagauz Halkı Congress in May.

Bulgar opened the meeting and in grand manner recognized the historic events of the day. “Perestroika has given this opportunity... to bring about the aspirations of many generations of our ancestors.”¹¹² To justify this unilateral approach to obtain autonomy, Bulgar predicted that if the political situation in the republic continued on the same trajectory, the state would continue to weaken and eventually fail. He warned that the Gagauz would suffer at the hands of the Communist Party which was indulging the Popular Front and Moldovan nationalism. Consequently, he continued, the Gagauz must protect themselves by declaring an autonomous republic within Moldova in order to guarantee the citizens their rights and create conditions for economic and cultural development. These stipulations continued to serve as the foundation for Gagauz demands for the next four years.

The Extraordinary Congress was a significant event on the Gagauz road to autonomy. It was attended by deputies from across southern Moldova who showed a high level of cooperation and unity among the Gagauz state apparatchiks.¹¹³ The Congress made the decision to form a Provisional Committee to carry forward its work. The committee elected

¹¹¹ Izvestiya, "Gaguzskii Vopros," 15 November 1989a; PARM, *Zaiavlenie*, signed by Mikhail V. Kendighelean and A.D. Novak, Comrat, 3 December 1989p.

¹¹² Bulgar Archives, *Avtonomiia Gagauzskogo Naroda--Velenie Vremeni*. This summary of the speech is from a transcript provided by Bulgar to the author.

¹¹³ Ceban, Personal Interview with Author. It also attracted the attention of other minority nationalities seeking greater autonomy as manifest by a congratulations card from the “Coordination council for the creation of Polish Autonomous Oblast in the Lithuanian SSR.” See Comrat Museum, *Sovety Narodnogo Dvizheniia Gagauz Khalky [Printed Letter of Congratulations]*, signed by Koordinatsionnyi Sovet po Sozdaniiu Pol'skoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti v Sostave Litovskoi SSR, 12 November 1989d.

as its chairman, Stepan Topal, with Mikhail Kendigelian, as his deputy.¹¹⁴ This new body, led by members of the strike committee, became the focus of political power. From then on, Topal and Kendigelian became the leaders of the movement, replacing Bulgar and the other founding members of Gagauz Halkı. With a mandate from the Gagauz Congress and the new leadership of the Provisional Committee, the Gagauz political movement grew stronger.

The Provisional Committee articulated Gagauz demands in early December 1989 by holding a much smaller “second session of the Extraordinary Congress of Representatives of the Gagauz People,” which was presided over by deputy chairman Kendigelian. It issued at least five key documents which all focused on the creation of a Gagauz Autonomous Republic. These included (1) a decree setting out 18 demands of the Provisional Committee; (2) a position paper on recent events surrounding Gagauz autonomy; (3) a declaration to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and MSSR; (4) an appeal from the delegates of the Extraordinary Congress to all deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR and People’s Deputies of the USSR, and (5) another appeal to specific deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR.¹¹⁵ These documents gave a new dimension to the Gagauz autonomy movement by providing plans to create political structures.

The Provisional Committee documents revealed that a clear path for the Gagauz movement was being planned even in 1989. It listed 11 goals and tasks of the Provisional

¹¹⁴ PARM, *Postanovlenie Vtorogo Zasedaniia Chrezvychainogo S'Ezda Polnomochnykh Predstavitelei Gagauzskogo Naroda*, signed by Mikhail V. Kendighelean and A.D. Novak, Comrat, 3 December 1989h. While initially the Provisional Committee was quite large (estimated at over 100), only a small group of members actively participated. See Mikhail V. Kendigelian, Personal Interview with Author in Comrat, 14 September 2004.

¹¹⁵ PARM, *Obrashchenie Delegatov Chrezvychainogo S'Ezda Predstavitelei Gagauzskogo Naroda K Deputatam Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR I Narodnym Deputatam SSSR*, signed by Mikhail V. Kendigelian and A.D. Novak, Comrat, 3 December 1989c; PARM, *Obrashchenie Delegatov Chrezvychainogo S'Ezda Predstavitelei Gagauzskogo Naroda K Narodnym Deputatam Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*, signed by Mikhail V. Kendighelean and A.D. Novak, Comrat, 3 December 1989d; PARM, *Polozhenie O Vremennom Komite Sodeistviia Utverzhdeniiu Gagauzskoi Avtonomnoi Sovetskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki*, signed by Mikhail V. Kendigelian and A.D. Novak, Comrat, 3 December 1989e; PARM, *Postanovlenie Vtorogo Zasedaniia Chrezvychainogo S'Ezda Polnomochnykh Predstavitelei Gagauzskogo Naroda*; PARM, *Zaiavlenie*.

Committee which outlined the road ahead. While these steps were not immediately taken, it showed that the planning process was moving forward in a deliberative manner. These goals included:

1. Assist in establishing Gagauz Autonomous SSR (GASSR) structures.
2. Clarify the borders of the GASSR.
3. Create electoral districts.
4. Develop a working constitution and election law.
5. Use media services to disseminate information.
6. Exercise authority until the first session of the GASSR Supreme Soviet .
7. Form working groups to develop a draft constitution and election law, and laws on referendums and finances; to coordinate with acting organs of state power; and to organize an information campaign.
8. Provide means to deal with dissenting members of the Provisional Committee.
9. Use specialists to prepare documents and provide consulting.
10. Establish an expense account for the Provisional Committee based on a specially structured fund from enterprises, organizations and private individuals.
11. Ask employers to allow the Provisional Committee members to serve while still on full salary.¹¹⁶

When possible, the path to autonomy used constitutional means. For example, one declaration called on the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in MSSR to review constitutional provisions in both the Constitution of the Moldavian SSR and the Constitution of the USSR which related to the Gagauz right of self-determination.¹¹⁷ Another decree supported the preliminary reports of the working groups of the legislative commission, headed by Gagauz

¹¹⁶ PARM, *Polozhenie O Vremennom Komitete Sodeistviia Utverzhdeniiu Gagauzskoi Avtonomnoi Sovetskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki*.

¹¹⁷ PARM, *Obrashchenie Delegatov Chrezvychainogo S'Ezda Predstavitelei Gagauzskogo Naroda K Deputatam Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR I Narodnym Deputatam SSSR*; PARM, *Zaiavlenie*.

activists Bulgar, Kuroglu, and Taushanshi, which concluded that Gagauz autonomy was justified.¹¹⁸ However, another path advocated unilateral means of do-it-yourself autonomy building. The process included creating a Gagauz government with new legislative and executive bodies.

In stage three, I make two key findings. First, elites converted political demands for territorial autonomy into a full-fledged public movement by expanding the Gagauz campaign from the academic and cultural arena into the economic and political arena. The strike committees helped energize a support base which was diverse yet committed to the same goal of an autonomous republic. Second, the end goal of creating an autonomous republic remained, even when the leadership of Topal and Kendigelian replaced Bulgar. The Provisional Committee pushed the development of Gagauz preferences into stage four by transforming the political movement into a concerted effort to build structures to implement autonomy.

The next major event for the Gagauz was the republic-level parliamentary elections of 1990. The elections revamped the political power structures within Moldova as the Popular Front took over an empowered Moldovan parliament. A constitutional path towards autonomy would be forced to find safe transit through the highly nationalist political environment of post-election Moldova.

1.3.4 Stage Four: Creating Legitimate Structures

In the last stage of preference development, the Gagauz requested that the newly elected parliament in Moldova carefully consider the Gagauz request for autonomy. A close examination of the new parliament and its dealings with the Gagauz is provided in Chapter Three. Ultimately, a new parliamentary commission considered the Gagauz request and

¹¹⁸ PARM, *Postanovlenie Vtorogo Zasedaniia Chrezvychainogo S'Ezda Polnomochnykh Predstavitelei Gagauzskogo Naroda*.

rejected it. The rejection of Gagauz autonomy by the parliament put into motion a series of steps which transformed Gagauz preferences into legitimate political structures.¹¹⁹ The Provisional Committee began to fulfil its mandate to create the organizations necessary for territorial autonomy. The Soviet presidiums of the two largest Gagauz cities, Comrat and Ceadâr-Lunga, added their support and endorsed the calling of another Congress on 19 August.¹²⁰ The Provisional Committee and Gagauz Halkı worked to create a central electoral commission for upcoming general elections for a new popular assembly. They prepared documents to be adopted which would give a legal and economic foundation for the new republic.

Less than two weeks after the Moldovan parliament rejected Gagauz autonomy, the Gagauz held the most noteworthy congress to date: the First Gagauz Congress of People's Deputies. On 19 August 1990, more than 700 deputies from village councils to deputies in the parliament assembled in Comrat to proclaim the creation of the Republic of Gagauz within the USSR.¹²¹ The Congress adopted the following rulings:

- Repealed previous decrees of the Moldovan Supreme Soviet
- Rejected the conclusion of the Supreme Soviet commission reports
- Asserted that the Gagauz are indigenous residents of the region
- Declared the borders of the Gagauz republic encompassing the territory of three *raions* (Vulcănești, Comrat, and Ceadâr-Lunga)
- Rejected any legal obligations of the Gagauz to the MSSR
- Claimed the right of a national-state formation

¹¹⁹ Kendigelian, Personal Interview with Author; Topal, Personal Interview with Author.

¹²⁰ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Obrashchenie K Deputatam Mestnykh Sovetov Narodnykh Deputatov, Ko Vsemu Naseleniiu Komratskogo, Chadyr-Lungskogo, Vulkeneshtskogo, Tarakliiskogo I Basarabiaskogo Raionov SSR Moldova," 18 August 1990b.

¹²¹ Pravda, "Co Vsemi Vytakaiushchimi..." 22 August 1990a; Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Postanovlenie Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta O Resheniiakh "Pervogo S"Ezda" Narodnykh Deputatov Vsekh Urovnei Ot Territorii Kompaktnogo Prozhivaniia Gaguzskogo Naseleniia," 22 August 1990d.

- Claimed the right to act independently on the draft Union treaty
- Declared intention to develop a functioning economy with its own financial system
- Declared intention to form a Central Election Commission by 22 August 1990
- Declared intention to hold elections for the Supreme Soviet of the Gagauz Republic on 28 October 1990

Of all the declarations, the most significant was the “Declaration on the Freedom and Independence of the Gagauz People from the Republic of Moldova” and the intention to begin building their own institutions to form an independent republic.¹²² This showed that the Gagauz were determined to establish legitimate political institutions. The next step was the organization of elections for a Gagauz Supreme Soviet.

The Provisional Committee began to carry out government-like functions and chose an electoral committee to organize and conduct the October elections.¹²³ However, as the October elections came closer, tensions with Moldova ran high and the risk of confrontation became more real. Elections were seen as a significant legitimizing force for stated Gagauz preferences. Until the elections, Moldovan leaders dismissed the decrees and declarations as simply a group of power-hungry elite or extremist-minded leaders whose “destructive separatist actions” had destabilized the situation.¹²⁴ This approach by Moldova sought to

¹²² Pravda, "Co Vsemi Vytakaiushchimi..."; Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Postanovlenie Prezidiyma Verkhovnogo Soveta." Kendigelian described how the key document, a declaration of independence, was not ready just three days before the Congress. For legal assistance, a scholar from Odessa was convinced to travel to Comrat and prepared it the night before. See Kendigelian, Personal Interview with Author.

¹²³ FBIS, "The Gagauz Seek a Compromise," *Soyuz*, (1 September 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-189, 28 September 1990i; M Kendigelian, "Postanovlenie Parlamenta Gagauzskoi Respubliki," *Haberlär*, 14 June 1994.

¹²⁴ For a review of Moldova's reaction during this period, see FBIS, "Let Us Protect Our National Dignity," *Sovetskaya Moldova*, (4 September 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-198-S, 12 October 1990m; Rabochaya Tribuna, "Politika Zdravogo Smysla," 15 September 1990; Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Postanovlenie Prezidiyma Verkhovnogo Soveta."; Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Postanovlenie Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova O Prichinakh Obostreniia Obshchestvenno-Politicheskoi Obstanovki I Mezhnatsional'nykh Otnoshenii V Respublike," 31 August 1990e; Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Postanovlenie

discredit the Gagauz issue as simply opportunistic demands by a small group of Gagauz leaders. Popular elections with widespread participation would be a strong counter to Moldova's portrayal of events.

In the face of protests and decrees coming out of Chişinău, another Congress of People's Deputies numbering over 700 was held in Comrat on 16 September 1990.¹²⁵ This Second Congress of People's Deputies considered Moldova's response and pressed forward with the construction of a Gagauz republic. They approved documents prepared by the Provisional Committee which set out to hold elections during the following month.

FIGHT FOR ELECTIONS

As the elections neared, the Gagauz moved closer towards establishing a republic. In mid-October, the Gagauz Provisional Committee offered one last opportunity to stop the scheduled elections if the following conditions were met: Moldova's parliament revoked their decision on the Gagauz autonomous republic; authorities released a Gagauz leader from prison; and the republic-level government dismissed the criminal proceedings against members of the Provisional Committee.¹²⁶ However, by that time the opportunity had passed as the new prime minister of the Moldovan government, Mircea Druc, had already dispatched a large group of nationalist "volunteers" to stop the election from taking place. With Moldovan nationalists on their way, the Gagauz stepped up to fight for the right to hold their elections.

Verkhovnego Soveta SSR Moldova O Nekotorykh Merakh Po Stabilizatsii Obshchestvenno-Politicheskoi Obstanovki V SSR Moldova," 5 October 1990g.

¹²⁵ TASS, "Gagauz 'Republic' Congress Held," (16 September 1990), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-180, 17 September 1990b.

¹²⁶ Izvestiya, "Moldova: Napriazhennost' Narastaet," 25 October 1990c. Moldova's authorities had arrested Leonid Dobrov, then one of the leaders of a new Gagauz organization, *Arkalyk*. Moldova's prosecutor's office described it as an extreme, radical organization with "terrorist" intentions. See Izvestiya, "Arestovan Odin Iz Liderov Gagauzov," 16 September 1990a.

The incursion of Moldovan volunteer nationalists, numbering somewhere around 40,000, forced the Gagauz to choose to act or abandon their plans.¹²⁷ It was an ill-conceived plan by “inexperienced leaders” which could have ended in sizable bloodshed.¹²⁸ On 24 October, the first bus left Chişinău, followed by convoys of buses, full of volunteers who had been recruited to stop the “Gagauz separatists.”¹²⁹ The Gagauz defended themselves by digging trenches and setting up vehicle blockades. Topal and Kendigelian learned of the volunteer movement from friends and relatives in Chişinău and sought help from Soviet forces of the 98th Airborne Division of the USSR Army, which were stationed in Bolgrad, Ukraine, forty miles south of Comrat. The Gagauz leaders met with General Vostrotin, the Division Commander, and asked him to defend the Gagauz from the Moldovans. According to Topal and Kendigelian, General Vostrotin sought for Moscow’s permission but it was denied. Instead, he decided to send some armoured vehicles on “manoeuvres” which took up positions on major roads leading into the Gagauz cities.¹³⁰ On the morning that the Moldovan volunteers moved to control Comrat, they found that the Gagauz had blockaded roadways using tractors, buses, and trucks.¹³¹ The display of force by the Soviet Army detachment kept the Moldovan volunteers at bay.

The Soviet troops stayed for a few days and then returned to their base in Bolgrad.¹³² At the same time, the Gagauz had recruited a group of several hundred armed volunteers from Transnistria. They stayed in the Gagauz region until the Soviet troops from the USSR

¹²⁷ The reported number of volunteers varies wildly from 3,000-100,000. Most western estimates use the figure 40,000.

¹²⁸ Mircea Snegur, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 15 November 2005.

¹²⁹ Komsomolskaya Pravda, "Tropa Voyny: Kto I Zachem Tolknul Na Nee Zhitelei Moldovy?," 16 November 1990.

¹³⁰ Kendigelian, Personal Interview with Author. The event was also reported on Moscow television. See Moscow World Service, "Coverage of Crisis Situation in Gagauz Region," (27 October 1990), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-209, 29 October 1990.

¹³¹ FBIS, "Coverage of Crisis Situation in Gagauz Region," *Moscow Television Service--120 Minutes*, (27 October 1990), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-209, 29 October 1990b.

¹³² FBIS, "Coverage of Crisis Situation in Gagauz Region," *Moscow Television Service--Television News Service*, (27 October 1990), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-209, 29 October 1990a.

Internal Affairs Ministry (MVD) arrived. Moscow's assistance continued for a few months with President Snegur's approval as he agreed that MVD troops would bring stability to the region. The Gagauz had refused to be intimidated by the Moldovan volunteers and became even more resolved to implement their plans for a Gagauz Republic.

Out of fear that the region would be attacked, elections for a Gagauz Supreme Soviet were moved forward and began on 25 October.¹³³ While nearly surrounded by the Moldovan volunteers, the Gagauz counted the votes and held their first session of the newly elected legislature of the Gagauz republic on 30 October. Deputies chose Stepan Topal as the chairman of the Gagauz Supreme Soviet, then invoked a moratorium on activities in order to allow for further negotiations with the authorities in Chişinău.¹³⁴ After a month of unsuccessful negotiations, the Gagauz held another session of the Gagauz Supreme Soviet on 10 December where they adopted a declaration on the sovereignty and principles of the new republic within the Soviet Union.¹³⁵ Topal as the Supreme Soviet chairman acted on behalf of the new GASSR.

After the declaration of sovereignty by the 'Gagauz Republic' in December 1990, Gagauz demands remained unchanged. These demands included the following main points: (1) recognition of the Gagauz as a people; (2) the designation of a territorially defined autonomous region; (3) a popularly elected legislative body; (4) authority over cultural development with control over political, economic, and education policy; and (5) a right of the Gagauz to self-determination irrespective of Moldova's future status. For the Gagauz, the best alternative to meet these objectives was still a form of territorial autonomy.

¹³³ TASS, "Gagauz Leader Calls for Calm," (25 October 1990), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-207, 25 October 1990c.

¹³⁴ FBIS, "Crisis Situation in Gagauz Republic Continues," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, (1 November 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-217, 8 November 1990d; Pravda, "Truden Kazhdyi Shag," 1 November 1990b.

¹³⁵ ITAR-TASS, "Moldovan Interior Minister on Troop Withdrawal," (11 December 1990), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-239, 12 December 1990b.

WAITING FOR A SETTLEMENT

While continuing to negotiate with Chişinău about the possibility of an autonomous republic within Moldova, the Gagauz attempted to negotiate directly with the Soviet leadership in Moscow.¹³⁶ The goal was to create a 16th republic which would participate as an equal with Moldova at the all-Union level. The result of the Gagauz efforts was frustration with the leadership of the Soviet Union. In an April 1991 interview, Topal criticized Gorbachev and the current chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Anatoli Lukianov, for their lack of recognition of Gagauz demands.¹³⁷ Other Gagauz elite spoke of how they were “betrayed” by the Soviet leadership.¹³⁸ Without support from Gorbachev, the possibility of an independent Soviet republic for the Gagauz was very remote.

After the Soviet Union broke apart, the Gagauz leadership understood that the only way to obtain territorial autonomy was from Moldova.¹³⁹ Four months after the Soviet Union dissolved, Gagauz leaders and businessmen met with the leadership of the Moldovan Parliament to discuss the formation of an autonomous Gagauz region.¹⁴⁰ The next month parliamentary commission members were discussing a draft law entitled “On the Statute of the Gagauz Self-administered Territory.”¹⁴¹ This began a long series of negotiations to find the proper solution to solve the Gagauz question. Gagauz leaders described the period of

¹³⁶ FBIS, "Gagauz Leaders Decide to Retain Supreme Soviet," *TASS*, (9 January 1991), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-007, 10 January 1991d.

¹³⁷ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, "My Nakhodimsia Mezhdub Nebom I Zemlei," 18 April 1991.

¹³⁸ Burgudji, Personal Interview with Author.

¹³⁹ Gagauz leaders confirm that there was never any serious effort to establish an independent state. See Petr Ilich Buzadzhi, Personal Interview with Author in Comrat, 13 September 2004; Ivan P. Cristioglo, Personal Interview with Author in Comrat, 14 September 2004; Kendigelian, Personal Interview with Author; Topal, Zlatov, and Telpiz, Personal Interview with Author.

¹⁴⁰ INTERFAX, "Gagauz Agrees Not to Form Independent Republic," (10 April 1992), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-92-072, 14 April 1992a; RFE/RL Weekly Review, "Gagauz Agree to Abandon Idea of Own Republic," *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, no. 18 (1992b).

¹⁴¹ ROMPRES, "Parliament Rejects Gagauz Self-Determination," (22 May 1992), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-92-104, 29 May 1992a.

1991 to 1993 as a time when they were “waiting for a settlement.”¹⁴² Moldova’s actions during this period are examined in Chapter Four.

As the Gagauz watched the Republic of Moldova mature, they consistently requested a solution with political structures similar to what they had established in 1990. This included a popularly elected legislative body, a regional governor, and liberal authority to determine laws and policy on issues ranging from property taxes to school curriculum. Occasionally the Gagauz joined the separatist region of Transnistria in calls for creating a federation of three equal political entities—Moldova, Transnistria, and the Gagauz republic.¹⁴³ However, while Transnistria had the economic base on which to build an independent republic, the Gagauz were too small and too poor to exist as an entity equal to Moldova and Transnistria.¹⁴⁴

In the end, a settlement was achieved when Moldova finally passed a form of territorial autonomy resembling the de facto status quo. Moldova’s offer included a thirty-five member ‘People’s Assembly’ elected in single-member districts, a popularly elected regional governor or *Başkan*, and a local government called the Executive Council. The autonomous region was granted the right to adopt laws in the areas of culture, education, local planning, health services, and local taxation issues. In general, the Gagauz were given what they had long demanded: the authority to resolve questions of political, economic and cultural development within the Republic of Moldova.

There are two important findings from this final stage of preference development. First, careful planning by Gagauz leaders led to autonomy within the Republic of Moldova.

¹⁴² Buzadzhi, Personal Interview with Author; Kendigelian, Personal Interview with Author.

¹⁴³ INTERFAX, "Helsinki Committee Conference Held in Komrat," (22 January 1992), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-92-015, 23 January 1992c.

¹⁴⁴ Ceban, Personal Interview with Author; Topal, Personal Interview with Author. Transnistria introduced their own currency and set up a patrolled border with Moldova. In contrast, Gagauz acknowledged their dependence on Moldova. The Gagauz accepted the Moldovan Lei and never established customs posts on their supposed border. See FBIS, "Gagauz Premier Topal Wants Free Economic Zone," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (12 February 1992), translated in FBIS document, FC92-000014236, 13 February 1992c.

Gagauz leaders initially attempted to obtain autonomy using the legislative process. This path was blocked by the Moldovan parliament's rejection of a Gagauz Autonomous Republic. The Gagauz then chose a different path and acted unilaterally to create their own republic within the Soviet Union. The separation from Moldova was calculated and predictable.

Second, the building of political structures like a popularly elected legislature entrenched Gagauz demands. The structures defined the boundaries of future negotiations with Moldova to a narrow band of options which centred on territorial autonomy. This became the basis of the negotiated settlement with Moldova.

1.4 Conclusion

This reconstruction of events shows narrow and consistent Gagauz preferences. This finding directly contradicts previous work describing shifting Gagauz preferences to explain the significant political outcomes which marked relations between the Gagauz and Moldova from 1988 to 1995.¹⁴⁵ One set of authors purports that Gagauz leaders had "little interest in any arrangement" as they were still "developing a sense of Gagauz identity" during the early 1990s.¹⁴⁶ These Gagauz elites, it is argued, eventually calculated that autonomy would allow them to strengthen their positions within the region.¹⁴⁷ As a result, a causal factor in producing the 1994 autonomy settlement was a moderation of Gagauz goals.¹⁴⁸ Others argue that groups like the Gagauz mobilized to protect their interests in the face of empowered majority-controlled parliaments. Once mobilized, strategic thinking Gagauz elites made

¹⁴⁵ The authors assert that the Gagauz shifted from being an ally to the Popular Front to declaring their intent to break away from Moldova and establish an independent state. See Chinn and Roper, "Territorial Autonomy in Gagauzia," 96; King, "Minorities Policy in the Post-Soviet Republics: The Case of the Gagauzi," 746; King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 129.

¹⁴⁶ Chinn and Roper, "Ethnic Mobilization and Reactive Nationalism: The Case of Moldova," 311; Chinn and Roper, "Territorial Autonomy in Gagauzia," 96.

¹⁴⁷ King, "Minorities Policy in the Post-Soviet Republics: The Case of the Gagauzi," 752.

¹⁴⁸ Batt, "Federalism Versus Nationalism in Post-Communist State- Building: The Case of Moldova," 41; Chinn and Roper, "Territorial Autonomy in Gagauzia," 96-97.

demands to maximize their interests.¹⁴⁹ It was the exploits of “radical” Gagauz leaders, it is contended, which resulted in Gagauz demands for independence.¹⁵⁰

In this chapter, I challenge these previous explanations by making the following three points. First, Gagauz preferences for autonomy emerged early on from an elite-held perception of an endangered Gagauz identity. It is impossible to put an exact date on the emergence of Gagauz preferences for an autonomous republic. However, the evidence shows that modern discussions began in the mid-1980s and were fostered by Gagauz elites who had taken note of the vulnerable Gagauz identity decades earlier. Discussions by Gagauz elites beginning with Tanasoglu resulted in extensive governmental actions and reactions from 1982 to 1987. By 1987, elite preferences for Gagauz autonomy had emerged in public discourse. The Gagauz elite adopted a solution with which they were intimately familiar. National territorial structures were used throughout the Soviet Union for national minorities of similar sizes.

Second, Gagauz political demands were narrow and focused. Gorbachev’s reforms had allowed informal organizations like the Gagauz Halkı to form. This gave the Gagauz an organizational structure to further explore their demands. A review of the Congresses held by these organizations show the specific demand for territorial autonomy was stated early and often. Table 1.2 lists the major Gagauz meetings and Congresses which took place from 1989 to 1990. Even with a wide spectrum of policy options to protect a minority nationality’s identity, the Gagauz demand for territorial autonomy was consistent. The only change in Gagauz demands was the context in which they could obtain territorial autonomy. At the meetings up until the 22 July 1990 Congress, the Gagauz demanded an autonomous republic within Moldova known as the GASSR. After the rejection of Gagauz autonomy by

¹⁴⁹ King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 216-17.

¹⁵⁰ King, "Minorities Policy in the Post-Soviet Republics: The Case of the Gagauzi," 746; Roper, "Regionalism in Moldova: The Case of Transnistria and Gagauzia," 117.

the Moldovan parliament on 27 July 1990, the Gagauz declared a separate republic within the USSR. From the Gagauz perspective, the essence of the demand was the same. This specific solution of territorial autonomy was what the Gagauz believed would allow them to adequately protect their identity.

Table 1.2 Gagauz Meetings and Congresses (1989-1990)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Conference/Congress</i>	<i>Organizer</i>	<i>Political Demand</i>
21 February 1989	First Conference	Gagauz Halkı	Territorial autonomy
2, 9, 16 April 1989	Official Meetings in Comrat, Beşalma, Ceadîr-Lunga	Gagauz Halkı	Territorial autonomy
21 May 1989	Gagauz Halkı Congress	Gagauz Halkı	Territorial autonomy
12 November 1989	Extraordinary Congress of the Gagauz People	Gagauz Halkı	Territorial autonomy
3 December 1989	2 nd Session of the Extraordinary Congress of the Gagauz People	Provisional Committee	Territorial autonomy
22 July 1990	3 rd Session of the Extraordinary Congress of the Gagauz People	Provisional Committee	Territorial autonomy
19 August 1990	First Congress of People's Deputies	Provisional Committee	Territorial autonomy
16 September 1990	Second Congress of People's Deputies	Provisional Committee	Territorial autonomy

Third, Gagauz demands became entrenched with the formation of legitimate political structures in the de facto Gagauz republic. This slow and steady process was finalized with the establishment of actual democratic bodies in 1990 which included a popularly elected legislature. Building on preparation begun by the Provisional Committee in December 1989, the Gagauz set up the political structures of an autonomous republic. These political structures had important consequences. When Moldova came looking for rapprochement, the Gagauz elite had a solid baseline from which to negotiate. Any serious solution could only be a derivative of the institutional structure the Gagauz had put in place.

Identifying stable preferences is a significant benefit to isolating causation. With no changes in Gagauz political demands, I argue that other causal factors were responsible for the separation, stalemate, and settlement which occurred from 1988 to 1995. In the following four chapters I show how changes in institutional features help explain the different outcomes which marked the political struggle between the Gagauz and Moldova over the issue of autonomy.

CHAPTER 2: AGENDA CONTROL IN THE SOVIET ERA: 1988-1989

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how well the institutional arrangements in the Soviet Union accommodated the Gagauz and their desire to create an autonomous republic. It would seem unlikely that the Gagauz could gain access to the crowded political agenda of the Soviet Union in 1989. Mikhail Gorbachev was in the midst of historic reforms in order to correct the severe institutional weaknesses of the state. Neither he nor any other top party leader was interested in creating a new national political structure to benefit a group which numbered less than one percent of the population. Instead, Gorbachev's focus was on keeping the "Union" a viable political entity. When Gorbachev redesigned the legislative bodies at the all-Union level, autonomy for the Gagauz, or any other national minority, was not an issue he wanted to address.

However, even without Gorbachev's support, the Gagauz were able to gain access to the agenda of the Soviet Union. I examine this unexpected event by describing the political actors and agenda setters in the Soviet Union who were involved with the Gagauz question. I then consider what features of governance most affected the ability of these political actors to control the agenda and produce favourable legislative outcomes. This framework structures the chapter as I consider how the interaction of political actors and institutional features affected the Gagauz question. I show why the Gagauz were able to gain de facto recognition of their demands for territorial autonomy through the creation of a government commission.

I argue that the legislative institutions of the Soviet Union were remarkably accommodating to Gagauz concerns. In the political forums of the new Congress of People's Deputies and a revamped USSR Supreme Soviet, the Gagauz, a people of a few hundred thousand, propelled their cause onto the agenda of the Soviet Union's parliament. Ironically, Gorbachev's reforms which had been aimed at consolidating his power, allowed the Gagauz

to bypass the normal bureaucratic barriers and gain official recognition of their plight. This increased Gagauz confidence that their demands could be met by finding a legislative solution.

2.2 The Gagauz on the Soviet Stage

Before Gorbachev's reforms, political power was located in the highly disciplined and centralized Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). A 1977 constitutional provision codified this authority which attributed "all other matters" not delineated in the constitution to the USSR instead of to the competence of the republics. The effect was that CPSU officials, representing the Union, could deal with "practically all matters...for whatever reason."¹ The hierarchical Communist Party controlled policy down to the lowest level.

This was especially true from 1988 to 1989 when Gorbachev, as General Secretary of the Communist Party, made institutional changes to give him more control over policy making.² Gorbachev's constitutional reforms were a "civilized political game in which all principal players but one must accept limitations on their power."³ In 1988, Gorbachev restructured the legislative process with a wave of amendments to the 1977 'Brezhnev' Soviet constitution. Gorbachev pushed through laws to help him address the problems of the faltering Soviet Union.

Gorbachev's reforms began taking shape at the Nineteenth Conference of the Soviet Communist Party in June and July of 1988. One significant change was Gorbachev's work on the all-Union legislative bodies—the new Congress of People's Deputies and the revamped USSR Supreme Soviet. The constitutional amendments, approved by the Central Committee

¹ This right came from article 73. See A. Shtromas, "The Legal Position of Soviet Nationalities and Their Territorial Units According to the 1977 Constitution of the USSR," *Russian Review* 37, no. 3 (1978), 270.

² Brendan Kiernan, *The End of Soviet Politics: Elections, Legislatures, and the Demise of the Communist Party* (Boulder; Oxford: Westview, 1993); Robert Sharlet, "The Path of Constitutional Reform in the USSR," in *Perestroika-Era Politics: The New Soviet Legislature and Gorbachev's Political Reforms*, ed. Robert T. Huber and Donald R. Kelley (Armonk, N.Y.; London: Sharpe, 1991).

³ Sharlet, "The Path of Constitutional Reform in the USSR," 25.

of the CPSU, were passed on 1 December 1988 by a special session of the old Supreme Soviet.⁴ Within this environment of structural change the issue of autonomy for the Gagauz made its way from tiny Comrat to Moscow.

2.2.1 Political Actors and Agenda Setters

In this section, I examine the political actors and agenda setters which dealt with the Gagauz issue in the Soviet Union in 1989. The most significant political actor was Gorbachev. Due to his reforms, the newly created Congress of People's Deputies and the redesigned USSR Supreme Soviet also played consequential roles. I conclude with a description of the key political leader in the MSSR, Simeon Grossu, and how he influenced the Gagauz question within the Soviet Republic.

GORBACHEV

Gorbachev introduced legislative changes in the Soviet Union to give him the ability to act more independently. He wanted to push through his economic reforms, increase accountability of the leadership, and bolster the legitimacy of his view of socialism.⁵ He used elected legislative bodies to draw power away from the entrenched conservative forces within the Communist Party. With control gradually shifting outside of the Communist Party, Gorbachev wanted to manage legislative outputs by holding leadership positions in both the party and the new Supreme Soviet.⁶

The Gagauz issue was a minor distraction on a large agenda of serious problems facing the Soviet Union. The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenians and Azerbaijanis had already created a similar issue for authorities in Moscow. By early 1988, the Politburo had concluded that it would not redraw national and territorial borders to solve

⁴ Stuart Goldman, "The New Soviet Legislative Branch," in *Perestroika-Era Politics: The New Soviet Legislature and Gorbachev's Political Reforms*, ed. Robert T. Huber and Donald R. Kelley (Armonk, NY; London: Sharpe, 1991), 55.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, 70.

national problems due to the risk of opening up other deep-seated conflicts within the Soviet Union.⁷ Even if the process of political restructuring would be allowed, Gorbachev believed it should have the approval of the republic government.⁸ In his memoirs, Gorbachev stated, “In the matter of inter-ethnic relations, I must admit that at that time [1989] we were still not ready to put forward a real program of reform that would have included transformation of the unitary state into a truly federal state.”⁹ In short, Gorbachev did not want to create a new national-territorial structure for the Gagauz or any other group.

Without support from the leader of the Soviet Union, the issue of Gagauz autonomy would normally have been quietly shelved. The creation of the new legislative bodies changed the status quo and gave the Gagauz a new venue to press their demands.

CONGRESS OF PEOPLE’S DEPUTIES OF THE USSR

Before Gorbachev’s reforms, the USSR Supreme Soviet was not a legitimate parliamentary body and the Congress of People’s Deputies did not exist. Instead of being a source of legislative initiative, the Supreme Soviet was a “ceremonial rubber stamp” which routinely met twice each year for several days where it unanimously passed all legislation put onto its agenda by government and party leaders.¹⁰ However, both the Congress of People’s Deputies and an invigorated Supreme Soviet slowly evolved into genuine legislative institutions after Gorbachev’s reforms.

The Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR was a new legislative body within the Soviet Union. When first envisioned, the Congress’ role was limited as it was only expected to meet once each year for a few days, and was not intended to be a functioning

⁷ This is based on the memoirs of Yegor Ligachev. He relates how a main point of a speech in May 1988 to the Party leaders in Azerbaijan was endorsed by Gorbachev. It stated: “We cannot resolve national issues by changing territorial borders without the republic’s consent. We must preserve the status quo. But I add that the lawful demands of all national and ethnic groups in the population, of every person, regardless of his nationality, must be fully satisfied....” See E. K. Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 173.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, *Mikhail Gorbachev: Memoirs* (London: Bantam, 1997), 291.

¹⁰ Goldman, “The New Soviet Legislative Branch,” 52.

legislature.¹¹ It was an extremely large body, with 2,250 deputies composed of three separate blocs. One bloc of 750 seats was elected from Union-level public organizations which were enumerated in the electoral law. Another bloc of 750 deputies was elected on the basis of equal electoral districts and the final bloc consisted of 750 deputies elected by the national-territorial divisions within the Soviet Union.

The Congress of People's Deputies had at least three effects on the political structure of the USSR. The first effect was that the Congress was granted a constitutional provision to act as an agenda setter for the USSR Supreme Soviet. While in session, the Congress directly approved agenda items for the Supreme Soviet to consider such as the law on the status of deputies.¹² Additionally, the newly elected Congress of People's Deputies in turn elected the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, who functioned as both the legislature's presiding officer and head of state. Combined with the ability to amend the constitution and give basic guidelines for domestic and foreign policy, the Congress became an agenda setter in its own right.

The second effect was that the Congress reinforced the decline of the Communist Party as the sole political power centre in the USSR. The semi-competitive elections combined with the lack of allocated seats, weakened the Communist Party's ability to control legislative proceedings. The weakening effect of the elections on the Communist Party was manifest in Moldova. The 1989 elections were a "sharp break with the Soviet Past" and impacted on the established political elite.¹³ In Moldova's multi-candidate electoral districts,

¹¹ Ibid, 56.

¹² Thomas F. Remington, "Parliamentary Government in the USSR," in *Perestroika-Era Politics : The New Soviet Legislature and Gorbachev's Political Reforms*, ed. Robert T. Huber and Donald R. Kelley (Armonk, NY; London: Sharpe, 1991), 194.

¹³ Archie Brown, "Introduction," in *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, ed. Archie Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001a), 9.

the Communist Party's candidates did very poorly.¹⁴ Like elsewhere, Moldova's elections showed the weakening grip of the Party, as officials lost in contested elections to activists of informal organizations like the Moldovan nationalist Popular Front, Russian-speakers' *Edinstvo*, and the Gagauz Halkı. Support for Communist Party candidates was lower than any other group represented in the election.¹⁵ The vote proved that the Communist Party, the dominant force in Soviet politics for decades, no longer held a monopoly of power and influence.

The third effect was that a constitutional provision ensured that the allocation of seats benefited those nationalities who had gained the status of an autonomous territory. Article 109 of the constitution prescribed the formula for the 750 seats from national-territorial divisions: 32 deputies for each of the 15 republics (480), 11 for each of the 20 autonomous republics (220), five for each of the 8 autonomous *oblasts* (40), and 1 for each of the 10 autonomous *okrugs* (10). The fact that autonomous structures were over-represented gave national minorities with a territorial structure a stronger legislative voice.

Overall, the creation of the Congress benefited the Gagauz. It had constitutional authority to pass on agenda items to the Supreme Soviet, reduced the control of the Communist Party, and provided overrepresentation of national minorities. The Congress became an access point to the agenda of the main legislative body, the USSR Supreme Soviet.

USSR SUPREME SOVIET

The invigorated USSR Supreme Soviet, a bi-cameral legislature, was the centre of most legislative activity. Within this legislative body the chairman, the presidium, the secretariat, and the committees each had varying degrees of agenda-setting power. Of this

¹⁴ Crowther, "The Politics of Democratization in Postcommunist Moldova," 289-91. Crowther provides the most detailed evaluation of the 1989 election in Moldova.

¹⁵ Ibid.

group, the chairman had by far the most control over the legislative agenda. For the first year, Gorbachev served as chairman of the Supreme Soviet with Anatoli Lukianov as his deputy.

Organizationally, the new Supreme Soviet followed the structure of the previous USSR Supreme Soviet, which was divided into two chambers: the Soviet (or Council) of Union and the Soviet of Nationalities. Elected on the second day of the Congress of People's Deputies, the Supreme Soviet was composed of 542 deputies with 271 deputies in each chamber.¹⁶ The Supreme Soviet was led by the presidium which included the chairman, the First Deputy, the chairmen of the two chambers, their deputies and the chairmen of the standing commissions and committees of the Supreme Soviet, and eighteen other deputies—one from each of the fifteen union republics, two from autonomous republics, and one representing autonomous *oblasts* and *okrugs*.¹⁷

In December 1988, Gorbachev pushed through Article 116 which granted the Soviet of Nationalities jurisdiction over issues regarding the equality and interests of nations, nationalities, and nationality groups.¹⁸ With this amendment, the Soviet of Nationalities had been granted control over legislation dealing with national-territorial structures and responsibility for ensuring protection of minority nationalities.

These nationality matters became the responsibility of a legislative body well-suited to address the issues. The Soviet of Nationalities deputies were elected from regional branches of designated public organizations and the bloc of deputies from the Congress of People's Deputies representing national-territorial units. The fifteen republics like Moldova

¹⁶ Republic level leaders played a strong role in determining which people would be on the ballot. However, the new body was significantly different than the previous Supreme Soviet. Only 10% of the Supreme Soviet were members of the previous Supreme Soviet and fewer than 20% had any prior legislative experience See Brown, "Introduction," 10; Goldman, "The New Soviet Legislative Branch," 65; Kiernan, *The End of Soviet Politics: Elections, Legislatures, and the Demise of the Communist Party*, 79.

¹⁷ Goldman, "The New Soviet Legislative Branch," 57.

¹⁸ Izvestiya, "Pravo Na Ravnopravie," 6 September, 1989c.

each secured eleven deputies in the Soviet of Nationalities (165), the twenty autonomous republics were each given four deputies (80), the eight autonomous *oblasts* were allocated two each (16) and one representative was allocated for each of the 10 *okrugs* (10). This resulted in a total of 271 deputies.¹⁹

With this allocation, the citizens in these autonomous regions, generally national minorities, had a higher degree of representation in the Soviet of Nationalities by a factor of *six to one* over citizens living outside autonomous national-territorial regions.²⁰ The disproportionate representation of non-titular nationalities was good news for the Gagauz. These national minorities now had a greater voice on nationality issues. The Soviet of Nationalities provided a more sympathetic audience for the Gagauz on the question of autonomy.

COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS

Previously, commissions had little democratic tradition in the old USSR Supreme Soviet. In the former Supreme Soviet, commissions did not exercise any formal power and on average only met once or twice a year. The commissions had no staff or budget of their own and relied on the presidium (controlled by the Central Committee of the CPSU) to set the agenda and the consultants of its Secretariat to manage their affairs. As a result, the commissions of old were not an influential factor in Soviet public policy.²¹

With the new makeover for the Supreme Soviet, committees and commissions began to play a role in the legislative process.²² The Soviet of Nationalities had a set of four permanent commissions and an additional 14 joint committees with the Soviet of Union in

¹⁹ Stenograficheskii Otchet, *Pervaia Sessia Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*, 11 vols., vol. 11 (Moscow: Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1989a).

²⁰ Per the 1989 census approximately 30 million people lived in autonomous national-territorial regions who were represented by 106 representatives. Compare this to a total Soviet Union population of nearly 290 million who were represented by 165 representatives.

²¹ Kiernan, *The End of Soviet Politics: Elections, Legislatures, and the Demise of the Communist Party*, 24-25.

²² Ibid. For a detailed discussion of committees, see Kiernan's (1993) Chapter Seven, "Committees at Work."

the Supreme Soviet. The true nature of the Supreme Soviet commissions' responsibilities developed gradually as there were widely differing interpretations of what the committees were tasked to do. One scholar asserts that "Gorbachev's refusal to resolve the committee system's existential questions signalled his desire to control them."²³

The allocation of committee members was not like other legislatures which rely on party membership or seniority. Instead, membership was determined by the presidium ostensibly based on a combination of deputies' experience, expertise, and expressed interests.²⁴ In the end, Gorbachev, as chairman of the presidium, consulted with the chairmen of the Soviet of Nationalities and the Soviet of Union, before giving a prepared list to the individual chambers for their approval.²⁵

Within the Soviet of Nationalities, the Commission on Nationality Policy and Inter-ethnic Relations was formally established on 6 June 1989 and chaired by Georgi Tarazevich from Belarus.²⁶ Two weeks later, forty commission members were named which included a high proportion of deputies from autonomous regions.²⁷

Like the Soviet of Nationalities, this commission was very sensitive to self-determination requests from minority groups like the Gagauz who were seeking new national-territorial structures. For the Gagauz, the consideration of their concerns by the Commission on Nationality Policy and Interethnic Relations was critical. With its smaller size and substantive representation of deputies from autonomous regions, the commission provided an ideal setting for deliberating the merits of Gagauz autonomy.

²³ Ibid, 95.

²⁴ Goldman, "The New Soviet Legislative Branch," 64; Kiernan, *The End of Soviet Politics: Elections, Legislatures, and the Demise of the Communist Party*, 98-99.

²⁵ Kiernan, *The End of Soviet Politics: Elections, Legislatures, and the Demise of the Communist Party*, 97-98. Kiernan (1993) reports that candidates nominated by Gorbachev for commission chairman who were confirmed with "little debate."

²⁶ Ibid, 94-95.

²⁷ Stenograficheskii Otchet, *Pervaia Sessia Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*.

GROSSU

At the Republic-level, Simeon Grossu, First Secretary of the MSSR CPSU Central Committee, was the most influential political actor within Soviet Moldavia. Under the 1977 USSR constitution, republic leaders were given authority to act as a “local agent of the central government.”²⁸ Grossu received direction from Moscow and then exerted his control through the presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR. Chapter 11 of the 1978 MSSR Constitution gave the presidium the right of legislative initiative, to call elections, to convene the sessions of the Supreme Soviet, to coordinate activities of the legislative committees, and when the Supreme Soviet was not in session, to amend legislation.²⁹ In reality, these republic-level parliaments looked and operated much like the Union-level Supreme Soviet: uncontested elections for deputies; Communist Party supervision of the nomination process; agenda control in the hands of the Party; unanimous approval of all legislation introduced; and sessions held only two times per year.³⁰ Grossu controlled the MSSR Supreme Soviet, Presidium, and the Party from his position of First Secretary on the Central Committee.

The republic-level Supreme Soviet had authority to create special commissions “on any question.”³¹ This happened when the First Secretary deemed it appropriate. For example, in July 1988 Grossu established a special commission to study the question of the Moldovan language.³² In December 1988, the special commission submitted their report to the presidium of the MSSR Supreme Soviet. The presidium then directed several of its

²⁸ Shtromas, “The Legal Position of Soviet Nationalities and Their Territorial Units According to the 1977 Constitution of the USSR,” 270. Article 77 stated that a republic “carries out the decisions of the USSR’s highest organs of state authority and administration.”

²⁹ F. J. M. Feldbrugge, *The Constitutions of the USSR and the Union Republics: Analysis, Texts, Reports* (Alphen aan den Rijn, Netherlands: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1979), 308-10.

³⁰ Ibid, 302-11; Jerry F. Hough and Merle Fainsod, *How the Soviet Union Is Governed* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1979), 485-86.

³¹ Article 112 of the MSSR constitution. See Feldbrugge, *The Constitutions of the USSR and the Union Republics: Analysis, Texts, Reports*, 311.

³² King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 124-25.

permanent legislative committees to prepare draft laws on the topic. After the draft laws were drawn up, the precise wording of the law was decided by Grossu and the Party leadership.³³ The Party gave the draft to the presidium which presented it to the republic's Supreme Soviet for approval. The law designating Moldovan as the official language passed on 31 August 1989. Even in 1989, the MSSR Supreme Soviet deputies were a compliant group who approved the highly controversial measure by a vote of 321-11.³⁴

Grossu worked to keep the question of Gagauz autonomy off the local legislative agenda. He believed the restlessness of the Gagauz population could be placated by comprehensive programs to help the development of their language—what he considered the root of Gagauz grievances. Grossu's solution to the Gagauz issue was to use existing government structures to address their language issue.

SUMMARY

Gorbachev's reforms drastically changed the political scene in the Soviet Union. Even though Gorbachev and Grossu did not favour the creation of an autonomous region for the Gagauz, other political actors were emerging in the form of the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet. Within these legislative bodies, special commissions with a high concentration of national minorities were created to deal with nationality questions like those raised by the Gagauz. With the revisions of constitutional authority and electoral law, it was no longer possible for Gorbachev and Grossu to dictate policy at all levels of government. This opened the door for the consideration of Gagauz autonomy. In the next section, I identify the institutional features which allowed these political actors to control the legislative agenda.

³³ Ibid, 136-37.

³⁴ There were an "undetermined number of abstentions" in the 380-member parliament. See Associated Press, "Thousands of Moldavians Protest Language Compromise," (accessed by LexisNexis), 31 August 1989.

2.2.2 Agenda Control and Policy Outcomes

This section identifies which institutional features of agenda control were relevant to the Soviet Union's accommodation of Gagauz demands. To do this, I focus on Gorbachev's control, access points in the new Soviet legislative bodies, and the ability of Gorbachev to enforce discipline.

GORBACHEV'S RULE

Gorbachev exerted his rule through various legislative organizations.³⁵ As chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet he determined the agenda, assigned bills to committees, and scheduled the legislative calendar. Gorbachev also used the Secretariat, the administrative organ of the legislature, to exercise a "great deal of power behind the scenes" on behalf of the presidium.³⁶ The presidium coordinated the activities of the committees and commissions, which also determined committee membership based on which deputies were found "desirable" or "undesirable."³⁷

Gorbachev had little trouble *pushing* policy initiatives through the new Congress of People's Deputies and revised Supreme Soviet. However, Gorbachev had much more trouble *preventing* policy initiatives from moving through the legislative process. One weakness of the new institutional arrangement was the lack of a supporting cadre of majority party members. Without a loyal majority party, Gorbachev could not extend his control over all legislative proceedings. As a result, activity took place without Gorbachev's approval or perhaps knowledge. Additionally, the legislative reforms opened up more access points to the legislative agenda than originally planned. One of these access points to the Supreme Soviet agenda was via the legislative rules which governed the 2250-deputy legislative body, the Congress of People's Deputies.

³⁵ Remington, "Parliamentary Government in the USSR," 194.

³⁶ Goldman, "The New Soviet Legislative Branch," 57.

³⁷ Kiernan, *The End of Soviet Politics: Elections, Legislatures, and the Demise of the Communist Party*, 99.

The Congress of People's Deputies was intended to be a new forum by which Gorbachev could push through constitutional changes and specific policies. However, as Gorbachev attempted to direct the floor debate, it proved to be more difficult than anticipated. The huge Congress of 2,250 deputies became a stage for public discussion about the problems facing the Soviet Union. The body itself was "unwieldy" as it lacked a loyal and stable legislative majority which could be managed.³⁸ Additionally, the proceedings of the Congress were televised and well watched.³⁹ In this setting, the Congress became a bully pulpit by which deputies could complain about the state of affairs within the country. For example, a Georgian deputy seized the floor and called on deputies to hold a moment of silence for those killed in Tbilisi on 9 April 1989.⁴⁰ Observers noted that Gorbachev failed to anticipate the difficulties of controlling the Congress.⁴¹ As a result, access points to the legislative agenda became available to the Gagauz.

ACCESS POINTS

Three procedures allowed minority groups like the Gagauz access to the agenda. These procedures restrained the ability of the centralized Communist Party leadership to rule and they diffused control of the legislative agenda. The first procedure was the allocation of time for deputies to address the Congress. Certain time slots were given to the delegations which represented each of the union republics, autonomous republics, and principal social groups.⁴² Who would address the Congress and what would be said depended on each delegation's leadership. Due to this decentralized control, there was greater opportunity for groups to raise regional issues at the Congress. As a result, several deputies endorsed the

³⁸ Eugene Huskey, "Democracy and Institutional Design in Russia," in *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, ed. Archie Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 30. Though the majority of delegates were Communist party members, Gorbachev found himself in the middle of the conservatives and the reformers.

³⁹ Michael McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin* (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 75.

⁴⁰ Kiernan, *The End of Soviet Politics: Elections, Legislatures, and the Demise of the Communist Party*, 77-78.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 73-87.

⁴² *Ibid*, 81.

creation of a Gagauz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in their speeches before the Congress.

The second rule allowed individual deputies or groups of deputies to make “deputy requests” for an official explanation or position on a certain issue.⁴³ After the Congress’s first week, Lukianov reported that 20 of such requests had been made on subjects ranging from nuclear power capacity in Ukraine to the state of the Soviet public health system.⁴⁴ Similar to “deputy requests”, deputies were allowed to submit “appeals” on certain issues. Some of the appeals called for action to be taken by the all-Union bodies. It was this type of appeal on the issue of Gagauz autonomy which was considered by the Congress and then assigned to the Supreme Soviet.⁴⁵

A third procedure also proved very helpful to the Gagauz. The presidium of the Supreme Soviet referred appeals directly to the standing commissions for consideration instead of first staging the legislation before the entire Supreme Soviet or Soviet of Nationalities. The commission provided a better forum by which to debate the merits of autonomy.⁴⁶ In the smaller forum of the commission, especially the Nationality Commission, the Gagauz issue had a greater chance of finding a consensual solution.⁴⁷

DISCIPLINE

Previously in the Soviet Union, senior party leaders had maintained discipline by controlling the republic delegations. As noted by Remington (1991), “This practice of relying on the ranking members of territorial delegations for leadership in agenda-setting [had] been formalized in the standing orders of the Supreme Soviet. Each chamber of the

⁴³ Izvestiya, "S"ezd Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR (Zasedanie Deviatoe)," 4 June 1989e.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Remington, "Parliamentary Government in the USSR," 194.

⁴⁶ Döring, "Time as a Scarce Resource: Government Control of the Agenda," 237.

⁴⁷ Giovanni Sartori, "Will Democracy Kill Democracy? Decision-Making by Majorities and by Committees," *Government and Opposition* 10, no. 2 (1976).

legislature [used] a 'Council of Elders' to meet before sessions to discuss the agenda."⁴⁸ In these new legislative bodies, Gorbachev attempted to enforce discipline through the Council of Elders and party leaders. However, several changes had occurred which made this Soviet-era practice less successful. First, procedures to govern legislative debate in the new bodies were largely undefined.⁴⁹ Second, there was wide variance regarding the makeup and loyalty of republic delegations. Third, Gorbachev's reforms had weakened the Communist Party. Gorbachev and other leaders lacked the tools and means to ensure a disciplined majority party. Deputies enjoyed more autonomy to act independently. As a result, Gorbachev needed to work harder in order to push through his proposals. For example, when battles were fought in the Congress of People's Deputies over when to elect a Congress chairman and whether to make the election competitive, Gorbachev's preferences held but not without costs.⁵⁰

SUMMARY

This section evaluated the institutional features of the Soviet system immediately after Gorbachev's reforms. The Soviet system granted Gorbachev extensive control to rule legislative bodies. However, Gorbachev's control did not exclude certain access points for the Gagauz. In fact, the institutional structures diffused agenda control and weakened Gorbachev's ability to ensure deputy discipline. This diffusion and lack of discipline took place in the Congress of People's Deputies, the Supreme Soviet, and the specific commission which handled the Gagauz issue. As a result the Gagauz found an accommodating system willing to evaluate the validity of their claims. I now detail how the Gagauz use the institutional features of the Soviet system to consider Gagauz demands. My aim is to

⁴⁸ Remington, "Parliamentary Government in the USSR," 183.

⁴⁹ McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin*, 51-52.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 73-75.

understand the causal relationship between these features and the political outcomes which resulted.

2.2.3 *The Accommodating Soviet Commissions*

BACKGROUND

The process to create an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was uncharted territory in the modern Soviet system. The Gagauz wanted a structural change which had not occurred in the Soviet Union for fifty years. Of the twenty autonomous republics in the Soviet Union, eighteen had been granted a form of autonomy during the period of 1919-1925. The national-territorial structure of republics, autonomous republics, autonomous *oblasts*, and autonomous *okrugs* remained largely unchanged since the second Soviet Constitution of 1936.⁵¹ After 1936, there was a distinct lack of new territories designated as autonomous units.⁵² Five groups, who had been deported during World War II, the Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, Kalmyks, and Karachi, were restored to their previous status as autonomous regions in 1957 after Khrushchev renounced Stalin's actions.⁵³ In 1989, it was estimated that 58 nationalities in the USSR had been granted a form of a national-territorial structure, accounting for 97.7 percent of the Soviet population.⁵⁴

The Gagauz were part of the 'unrepresented club,' a grouping of minority nationalities like the Crimean Tatars and Meskhetian Turks who had no structure within the Soviet Union and no claim to a homeland outside of it. The Crimean Tatars, Meskhetian

⁵¹ Sheehy, "Ethnographic Developments and the Soviet Federal System," 63. The 1977 Constitution provisions concerning the autonomous regions were "basically the same as they were in the [1936] constitution." See Shtromas, "The Legal Position of Soviet Nationalities and Their Territorial Units According to the 1977 Constitution of the USSR," 266.

⁵² Exceptions were the annexation of the Baltic States and Bessarabia in 1940, followed by the annexation of Tuva in 1944. The only other changes involved designating a different status to previously created structures. In 1940, the Karelo-Finnish republic was upgraded from an *autonomous* republic and was considered the "16th republic" after the war. It was returned to its previous status as the Karelian ASSR within the Russian republic in 1956.

⁵³ Smith, "Nationalities Policy from Lenin to Gorbachev," 6.

⁵⁴ Sheehy, "Ethnographic Developments and the Soviet Federal System," 67.

Turks, and Volga Germans had all been deported from their homelands during the war and were not repatriated as part of Khrushchev's reforms in the late 1950s.⁵⁵ The Gagauz were unique in their status as a sizable geographically concentrated nationality which had never been deported, but still had no form of a national-territorial structure.

One reason for the lack of a national-territorial structure for the Gagauz can be attributed to their misfortune of being on the wrong side of history. The Gagauz were outside the Soviet Union when autonomous structures were being created. During the period 1919-1936 the Gagauz were Romanian citizens, when Bessarabia was part of Greater Romania. Unlike Tuva, which was an independent state prior to its incorporation into the USSR, there was no status for the Gagauz to maintain when Bessarabia was annexed after World War II.⁵⁶

In 1989, an *Izvestiya* article by a Soviet academic raised questions about righting these historical wrongs of groups like the Gagauz.⁵⁷ It stated that there were no articles in the constitution devoted to protecting the legal status of those nationalities which were not sheltered by national-territorial structures.⁵⁸ However, recent changes enabled new action to be taken. The draft Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) platform in 1989 recommended passing Soviet and republic level laws to guarantee rights for citizens who lived outside their own ethnoterritorial structure or who simply did not have one. It specifically recommended that individual republics take responsibility for defending the rights of all nationality groups residing in their territory. An awareness of the issue was

⁵⁵ Smith, "Nationalities Policy from Lenin to Gorbachev," 7. Both the Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans enjoyed their own autonomous republic before their deportation to Siberia and Central Asia during World War II. The Volga Germans never regained any status partially because like the Bulgarians in Moldova or Poles in Lithuania, there was an argument that a national-territorial formation existed for them in their ancestral homeland of Germany. A solution for Crimean autonomy was reached in 1998.

⁵⁶ Fondahl (1993) states that the *Tannu-Tuva* (Tuvan People's Republic) was "nominally independent" from 1921 until 1944. See Gail A. Fondahl, "Siberia: Native Peoples and Newcomers in Collision," in *Nation and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, ed. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 499-503.

⁵⁷ *Izvestiya*, "Pravo Na Ravnopravie."

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

being raised. Even without a clearly defined process, groups like the Gagauz were determined to press Soviet leaders for change.⁵⁹

In the next section I show how changes in the electoral law combined with certain legislative procedures to loosen agenda control in the Soviet legislative bodies. This allowed the Gagauz to push forward their demand for autonomy onto the Union-wide agenda. Once there, the Gagauz question began a parliamentary path which gave their minority view a real voice in the Soviet political process.

ACCESS TO THE USSR SUPREME SOVIET

I now focus on the events of 1988 to 1990 when the Gagauz issue was raised in the legislative bodies of the Soviet Union. I follow the Gagauz question as it travelled from Comrat to Moscow to Chişinău. As noted in Chapter One, Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost had a predictable result on smaller nationalities like the Gagauz. Gorbachev's reforms extended the capacity of nationalities to act in their own interest while heightening a sense that their group was in cultural danger.⁶⁰ Once mobilized, the Gagauz attempted unsuccessfully to attract support from Grossu and other members of the Moldavian SSR Communist Party Central Committee.⁶¹ Access to the MSSR Supreme Soviet agenda was through Grossu, who was working to keep the Moldovan population satisfied with his promotion of the Moldovan language.

For Grossu, the question of Gagauz autonomy took the proverbial backseat to Moldova's language issue. In December 1988, Grossu admitted that perestroika had influenced the growth of national consciousness within the republic. Out of this

⁵⁹ One solution described was to designate new small *raions*, settlements, and rurals where groups were geographically clustered but did not have a national-territorial entity. These lower level structures could be decreed by individual republics and given rights associated with cultural autonomy. An example was the Eveno-Bytantai national *raion* which was created within the Yakutsk ASSR by a decree of the Presidium of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR). It was acknowledged that creating autonomous structures (republics, okrugs, and oblasts) was a much more difficult issue.

⁶⁰ Suny, "State, Civil Society, and Ethnic Cultural Consolidation in the USSR: Roots of the National Question," 424.

⁶¹ Comrat Museum, *Khalk* [Newsletter of Gagauz Halkı].

consciousness emerged the “language problem” and Grossu outlined to the republic population the steps taken by the Party to improve the development of the Moldovan language, as well as Russian, Gagauz, and Bulgarian.⁶² Exercising its political clout, the Central Committee of the Moldavian SSR Communist Party adopted a resolution on the further development of social and political activity of the Gagauz (and Bulgarian) populations living in Moldova.⁶³ According to Grossu, while greater attention needed to be given to the Gagauz cultural needs, the solution was improving the teaching, visibility, and state support for the Gagauz language.⁶⁴

Grossu did not want to create a national territorial structure. Instead, Grossu argued that developing the Gagauz language was sufficient. Grossu moved to improve visibility of the Gagauz language by enacting several measures: ensuring that publications in Gagauz appeared in the republic newspapers; increasing Gagauz language study in local schools; and offering the right to conduct meetings in Gagauz. Meanwhile, Grossu kept the question of Gagauz autonomy off the MSSR legislative agenda.

Without Grossu’s support, the Gagauz decided that the appropriate political process for territorial autonomy should start in Moscow. In February 1989, Gagauz leaders left Comrat and travelled to Moscow with signed petitions requesting autonomy. In Moscow, they delivered the petitions to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and to the presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.⁶⁵ This was the logical path to take. Before Gorbachev’s reforms, political power and agenda control were held by the Communist Party under the Party chairman’s leadership. This institutional framework had characterized Soviet politics for several decades.

⁶² Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Vremia Konkretnykh Deistvii."

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Bulgar, Personal Interview with Author.

As described previously, issues like autonomy for national minorities distracted Gorbachev from the more serious problems facing the Soviet Union. The question of creating new national-territorial structures was not one the Soviet Union was in a position to answer. However, the political framework changed with the March 1989 elections for the USSR Congress of People's Deputies. With the multi-candidate elections, reduction of allocated seats for the Communist Party, and new constitutional provisions, the Congress of People's Deputies helped break the agenda-setting monopoly of the Party. The Gagauz leaders regrouped back in Comrat and waited for the Congress to begin.

On 25 May 1989, delegations from each republic gathered to form the new USSR Congress of People's Deputies. Moldova, like other smaller delegations, followed the tradition of leaving legislative leadership to senior members.⁶⁶ Moldova's delegation was led by the first secretary of the Communist Party in the MSSR, Simeon Grossu, and the chairman of the presidium of the MSSR Supreme Soviet, Aleksandr Mokanu. Grossu and Mokanu, as the ranking members, discussed the agenda presented by Gorbachev in the 'Council of Elders.'

While Grossu and Mokanu did not support an autonomous republic for the Gagauz, other members of Moldova's delegation tried to promote it. One was a Russian deputy and another was a Gagauz leader.⁶⁷ Both were unable to address the Congress due to the delegation's Moldovan leadership.⁶⁸ Instead, these two deputies submitted the text of their speeches which were published in the stenographic record after the Congress.⁶⁹ In the

⁶⁶ Remington, "Parliamentary Government in the USSR," 183.

⁶⁷ The Russian delegate was Yuri Blokhin and the Gagauz delegate was Mikhail Pashali.

⁶⁸ Grossu and Mokanu raised the general issue of new national formations (without mentioning the Gagauz by name) and suggested that nationality issues like these be considered by the newly formed USSR Supreme Soviet. See Mokanu's speech in *Izvestiya*, "S"ezd Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR (Zasedanie Deviatoe)."

⁶⁹ *Stenograficheskii Otchet, Pervyi S"ezd Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR*, 6 vols., vol. 4 (Moscow: Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1989b); *Stenograficheskii Otchet, Pervyi S"ezd Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR*.

published record, the two delegates explicitly declared their support for the establishment of a Gagauz autonomous republic.

The institutional changes in the Soviet parliament allowed other delegations to address the issue of Gagauz autonomy at the Congress. Knowing this, Gagauz Halkı leaders approached deputies from other regions—the Russian Federation, the Baltics, and the Turkic-speaking republics.⁷⁰ In total, four different deputies raised the Gagauz issue on the floor of the Congress in discussions with Gorbachev and his deputy, Anatoli Lukianov.⁷¹ While it did not grant direct access to the legislative agenda of the Congress, it gave the Gagauz exposure on the all-Union stage and displayed a level of support for their cause.

The right of a “deputy appeal” proved most beneficial to the Gagauz. The Gagauz Halkı leaders had found a sympathetic ear with a Deputy Anufriyev, representing the Rovno region of Western Ukraine. Anufriyev was half Gagauz, half Moldovan, and originally from Vulcănești in southern Moldovan.⁷² Anufriyev formally raised the question of the Gagauz on 2 June 1989 by using a deputy appeal.⁷³

During the ninth session of the Congress, the pivotal moment came when Lukianov, as acting chairman, noted that a “significant number” of appeals had been received on problems of nationality relations.⁷⁴ These included appeals on the situation in Abkhazia; on the historical truth of the Soviet Germans and Crimean Tatars; and on the creation of the Ingush ASSR. It also included the Ukrainian delegate’s appeal regarding the Gagauz situation in Moldova. Recognizing that the issues required additional study, Lukianov as acting chairman of the Congress, referred the appeals to the Supreme Soviet for review. The

⁷⁰ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Otvetsstvennost' Za Perestroiku."

⁷¹ Izvestiya, "Pervaia Sessia Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR: Zasedaniia Soveta Natsional'nostei (Zasedanie Pervoe)," 8 June 1989b; Izvestiya, "S"ezd Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR (Zasedanie Desiatoe)," 7 June 1989d; Izvestiya, "S"ezd Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR (Zasedanie Dvenadtsatoe)."

⁷² See Bulgar, Personal Interview with Author.

⁷³ Ibid; Izvestiya, "S"ezd Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR (Zasedanie Deviatoe)."

⁷⁴ Izvestiya, "S"ezd Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR (Zasedanie Deviatoe)."

right of deputies in the Congress to initiate legislative action had pushed the Gagauz issue across the floor and onto the Supreme Soviet agenda.

Once on the Supreme Soviet agenda, the Gagauz initiative was assigned to the Soviet of Nationalities who passed it along to the Nationality Commission. The path of the Gagauz question from Congress to the commission is depicted in Figure 2.1.

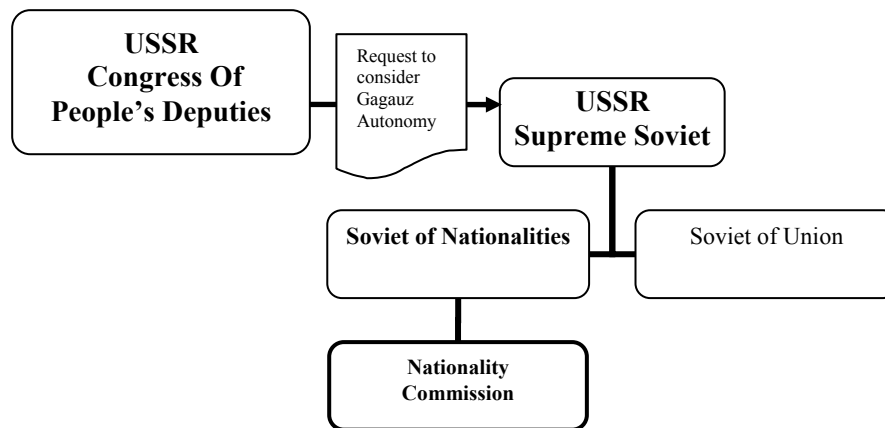


Figure 2.1 Legislative Path for Gagauz Autonomy

In July 1989, the Commission on Nationality Policy and Inter-ethnic Relations acted on several of the agenda items passed on to it by the Congress of People's Deputies. On 12 July 1989, the Nationality Commission carefully considered issues similar to the Gagauz question. The commission directed the Soviet of Nationalities to create new government commissions to study the problems in the autonomous *oblast* Nagorno-Karabakh, address the status of the Soviet Germans and consider the demands of the Crimean Tatars.⁷⁵

The establishment of special commissions granted the Armenians, Soviet Germans, and Crimean Tatars an opportunity to be heard. The commissions illustrated how access to the Supreme Soviet agenda did not translate directly into legislative outcomes such as a new statute.⁷⁶ Gorbachev and the small number of agenda players in the Soviet Union maintained

⁷⁵ Stenograficheskii Otchet, *Pervaia Sessia Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*.

⁷⁶ For example, none of the thirteen legislative actions on the agenda of the first session of the Supreme Soviet in 1989 was enacted. See Remington, "Parliamentary Government in the USSR," 194-95.

control over what changes to the status quo would take place at the all-Union level.

However, the actions of the Nationality Commission illustrated how the Soviet Union had granted access to the most underrepresented groups in society. Creating commissions acknowledged the concerns of these minority nationalities and kept the legislative process alive.

On 18 July, the Nationality Commission took up the issue of Gagauz autonomy. The Gagauz had taken advantage of the small commission setting to lobby its members to support their cause. Prior to the commission meeting at least two of the deputies had been contacted by the Gagauz: Yuri Blokhin from Moldova, and Igor Zelinskoy, a Ukrainian deputy who was the Rector of the Odessa University. Zelinskoy had been sent telegrams from Gagauz leaders in Vulcănești requesting his support at the beginning of the Congress.⁷⁷ Blokhin and Zelinskoy added their names to a document to sponsor a formal inquiry into the issue of a Gagauz autonomous republic.⁷⁸

In a historic moment for the Gagauz, the commission acted favourably on the autonomy motion. The commission formally directed the presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR to establish a commission to address the “appeal made by people’s deputies of the USSR regarding the creation of a Gagauz autonomous *oblast* on the territory of Moldova.”⁷⁹ With the directive to the Moldavian SSR, the process officially moved Gagauz demands from Moscow to Chișinău.

The Nationality Commission setting was invaluable. Besides the advantageous allocation of non-titular nationalities, the commission had the authority to conduct investigations into matters of inquiry without approval of the entire Supreme Soviet. The

⁷⁷ PARM, *Pravitel'stvennaia Telegramma*; PARM, *Telegramma*.

⁷⁸ PARM, *Reshenie O Zaprosakh I Obrashcheniiakh Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR Po Problemam Mezhnatsional'nykh Otnoshenii Postupivshikh V Adres S"Ezda*. This inquiry was signed by four deputies—Zelinskoy and another deputy from Ukraine; one from Russia; and Blokhin who was a leader of Moldova’s Russian *Edinstvo* political movement.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

referral of the Gagauz demands to a new commission kept the Gagauz issue alive within the Soviet political process. While far short of legislation creating a national-territorial structure, the Gagauz demand for an autonomous republic was given a stamp of approval as a legitimate issue worthy of state-sanctioned deliberation in a republic-level commission.

REPUBLIC-LEVEL POLITICS

In July 1989 the presidium of the MSSR Supreme Soviet received the directive from the USSR Nationality Commission.⁸⁰ As the Soviet Union hierarchical structure was still in place, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR dutifully created a commission to study the question of Gagauz autonomy. The MSSR presidium appointed Victor Pușcaș as the commission chairman. On 7 August 1989 a decree of the MSSR Supreme Soviet named the members of the commission followed by an 18 August 1989 decree giving a supplementary list of members. In the end, a significant number of Gagauz Halkı executive board members were on the commission.⁸¹

The appointment of Victor Pușcaș as chairman was noteworthy. Pușcaș, Moldovan by nationality and a lawyer by profession, held the position as a deputy chairman of the MSSR Supreme Soviet. Before becoming a deputy chairman, he was the chairman of the Supreme Court for the MSSR and also held an important position within the republic-level Communist Party as the chairman of the Inspection Commission.⁸² By 1989, he was arguably one of the more influential party leaders in the republic.⁸³ As the Party still retained

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ PARM, *Postanovlenie Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR: O Dopolnenii V Sostav Komissii Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR Po Izucheniiu Zaprosov Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR I Drugikh Obrashchenii O Sozdanii Avtonomii Gagauzskogo Naroda*, signed by Mircea Snegur and D. Nidelku, Chișinău, 18 August 1989f; PARM, *Postanovlenie Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR: Ob Obrazovanii Komissii Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR Po Izucheniiu Zaprosov Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR I Drugikh Obrachshenii O Sozdanii Avtonomii Gagauzskogo Naroda*, signed by Mircea Snegur and D. Nidelku, Chișinău, 7 August 1989g.

⁸² Constitutional Court, *Konstitutsionnyi Sud Respublika Moldova -- 10 Let Deiatel'nosti* (Chișinău: Kartdidakt, 2005), 8.

⁸³ Pușcaș was re-elected in 1990 and retained his position as deputy chairman, even though the Popular Front took control. He later became the Chief Judge of Moldova's Constitutional Court.

powerful agenda control and Puşcaş was a deputy chairman, this allowed Puşcaş freedom to run the commission as he saw fit. The rules and procedures Puşcaş employed to govern the commission influenced the Gagauz perception of the state's willingness to hear Gagauz concerns.

PUŞCAŞ COMMISSION

The mandate for the commission was to study the Gagauz problem and give a recommendation to the presidium of the MSSR Supreme Soviet for their action. The presidium would then determine whether to turn it over for approval to the Supreme Soviet of the Republic. Puşcaş felt that the "final decision" would be made in a session of the republic's Supreme Soviet.⁸⁴ In reality, republic authority was limited as Article 109 of the MSSR constitution only gave the Supreme Soviet the right to form and abolish *raions* within the republic.⁸⁵ Still, Puşcaş believed that a better solution would be found in the republic, as opposed to one imposed by Union-level legislative bodies.

In setting up the fifty member commission, Puşcaş displayed extraordinary deference to the Gagauz. He allocated seats on the commission by using the percentage of Gagauz who lived in the five *raions* populated by Gagauz which was approximately 47%.⁸⁶ Puşcaş also included the most prominent Gagauz Halkı executive members, including Stepan Bulgar, Maria Marunovich and Stepan Kuroglu.⁸⁷ This gave Gagauz Halkı access to the "serious work" of the commission.⁸⁸ In effect, Puşcaş thrust the heart of the Gagauz political voice directly onto the state commission.

⁸⁴ This sequence was provided by Puşcaş in a November 1989 interview. See FBIS, "The Gagauz Question?."

⁸⁵ Feldbrugge, *The Constitutions of the USSR and the Union Republics: Analysis, Texts, Reports*, 310. A range of political structures existed as possible solutions: the establishment of an autonomous republic, autonomous *oblast*, or autonomous *okrug*, or a less drastic step such as the designation of national *raions* and rural Soviets.

⁸⁶ FBIS, "The Gagauz Question?."

⁸⁷ It would still be over two months before the Gagauz Halkı was officially registered in Moldova. See Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Zapregistrirovany Obshchestvennye Ob"Edineniia," 27 October 1989h.

⁸⁸ Bulgar, Personal Interview with Author.

Puşcaş's actions were not unnoticed. His appointments were reviewed by the Gagauz Halkı Executive Council as they discussed the government's actions in an August 1989 meeting. The Gagauz Halkı leadership lauded the formation of the Puşcaş Commission by the presidium as a positive step, not only because of its composition but also due to the fact that the presidium of the Supreme Soviet was as an "organ of authority in the Republic."⁸⁹ The result was that the Gagauz viewed the commission as legitimate work and were committed to its success.

Moldovan officials had a different perspective regarding the Puşcaş Commission's work.⁹⁰ Real decision-making authority resided not in the commission but remained in the presidium. Thus, the commitment of Moldova's officials to the commission was lacking. This was reflected by poor attendance at commission meetings, a lack of interest in working group's assignments, minimal time and resources expended, and little participation in the development of a final recommendation. With that in mind, it is a fair assessment that Puşcaş built a commission to study the problem but not to solve it. This became apparent when the commission delivered its findings.

On 30 November and 1 December 1989, the Puşcaş committee met to present the results of their work.⁹¹ The working groups, all headed by Gagauz leaders, presented their findings. The results were not a surprise. First, the Gagauz people should be considered a "nation" even though it lacked a territorial formation in the Soviet Union and any political structure outside it. Second, with the "catastrophic" state of Gagauz culture, autonomy was needed and justified. The Gagauz deserved autonomy, it was argued, and it was now up to the state authority to grant it. After the Gagauz leaders spoke, Moldovan officials presented

⁸⁹ PARM, *Vypiska Iz Protokola N.2 Zasedaniia Soveta "Gagauz Khalky" Ot 19 Avgusta 1989 G.*, signed by Stepan Bulgar and G. Stomatov, 1989o.

⁹⁰ Victor Puşcaş, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 18 November 2005.

⁹¹ PARM, *Protokol Zasedaniia Komissii Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR Po Izucheniiu Zaprosov Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR I Drugikh Obrachshenii O Sozdanii Avtonomii Gagauzkogo Naroda*. The following material is condensed from eighty-three pages of minutes taken at the meeting.

the opposite view regarding the situation in southern Moldova. The atmosphere grew increasingly contentious as the group failed to reach any type of consensus regarding their findings on Gagauz autonomy.

After two full days of heated debate between the Gagauz leaders and Moldovan officials, Pușcaș announced that a consensus was unachievable. Pușcaș was reluctant to put the central question of Gagauz autonomy to a vote. This represented a tactical decision made at the discretion of the commission chairman. As the Gagauz were nearly half of the fifty-person commission, the Gagauz easily made up the majority due to absenteeism of less-interested Moldovan members.⁹² Pușcaș knew the outcome would be in favour of Gagauz autonomy and argued that voting would be inappropriate as more information was required to reach a decision on the issue. Pușcaș decided to extend the work of the commission and set a future date for the commission to meet again.⁹³

Seven weeks later Pușcaș led another commission meeting to discuss their updated findings.⁹⁴ Several times the two sides argued whether the issue of forming autonomy should be put before a vote of the commission. Pușcaș doggedly resisted, arguing that the group was not representative of the country's population. Pușcaș then turned the floor over to officials from Moscow who had been invited to discuss the question. They announced that the Supreme Soviet of the USSR was considering statutes regarding the status of all autonomous structures in the Soviet Union and asked the Gagauz for patience while negotiating these issues. These experts argued that more information was needed before a final decision could be reached.

⁹² Bulgar, Personal Interview with Author.

⁹³ PARM, *Protokol Zasedaniia Komissii Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR Po Izucheniiu Zaprosov Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR I Drugikh Obrashchenii O Sozdanii Avtonomii Gagauzskogo Naroda*.

⁹⁴ PARM, *Protokol Zasedaniia Komissii Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR Po Izucheniiu Zaprosov Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR I Drugikh Obrashchenii O Sozdanii Avtonomii Gagauzskogo Naroda*, Chișinău, 19 January 1990b. The following paragraphs are condensed from fifty-eight pages of minutes taken at the meeting.

Puşcaş ended the January meeting and with it the commission. In a show of accommodation, Puşcaş agreed to publish two different opinions: one which supported territorial autonomy and the other which supported a form of cultural autonomy. With that, Puşcaş recommended that the commission give the presidium of Moldova's Supreme Soviet its material, which could in turn ask the USSR Supreme Soviet to create a neutral expert commission to continue the study.⁹⁵ A decade later, Puşcaş reflected that the commission had been a success.⁹⁶

A review of Puşcaş's work shows that he managed the commission in such a way to produce inconclusive results without a consensus. This allowed the presidium to act according to its own interests without being bound by the commission's report. Equally important, Puşcaş had not alienated the Gagauz. His use of certain procedures had inspired Gagauz confidence in the process: allocating a high percentage of Gagauz to the commission which included the senior Gagauz leadership; appointing Gagauz leaders to head up key working groups; deliberate consideration of the issues to ensure all facts were collected; and including dissimilar perspectives in the final report. By allowing what amounted to a minority report, the Gagauz had voiced their position. Puşcaş's execution of the commission, while at times arbitrary and unstructured, was politically astute, especially as he was personally against creating any autonomous structure.⁹⁷

The Gagauz reaction to the Puşcaş Commission was mixed. Even though no consensus was found, both the all-Union and republic-level commissions had given the Gagauz a feeling of political inclusion and a genuine opportunity to present their demands.

⁹⁵ Ibid. Puşcaş could not resist declaring his position on the issue by stating that even though discussions regarding Gagauz autonomy had been going on since May 1989, he felt that not one scientific argument could be found to support it.

⁹⁶ Puşcaş, Personal Interview with Author.

⁹⁷ In an interview with local media, Puşcaş gave several reasons why he was against autonomy for the Gagauz. These included: (1) a lack of public support in the region; (2) the low percentage of Gagauz in the areas claimed; and (3) the overall small size of the group. See Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Nuzhna Li Budzhaku Avtonomiia," 1 February 1990a.

As Bulgar said immediately after the commission, “Now we do not need to convince anyone whether it is necessary to have a GASSR or not... The struggle for autonomy has become a long-term thing.”⁹⁸

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that the entrance of new agenda setters combined with the Soviet regime’s use of certain procedures diffused agenda control enough to allow the Gagauz voice to be heard. Deputy requests and appeals in the Congress of People’s Deputies accessed the Supreme Soviet agenda. In the Supreme Soviet, these requests and appeals were referred directly to standing commissions for consideration. The Gagauz question was handled by the Nationality Commission which had an overrepresentation of non-titular deputies. These features combined to produce a favourable outcome for the Gagauz—a Supreme Soviet-level directive to the MSSR Supreme Soviet to examine the merits of a national territorial structure.

In the MSSR Supreme Soviet Presidium, the leadership also used inclusive procedures to benefit the Gagauz. These procedures included: the consideration of the issue in the commission prior to the full legislative body; the appointment of commission seats to Gagauz at a rate over ten times greater than their percentage in Moldova; the slow deliberation on the issue; and the ability of the Gagauz to express their own views in the commission’s final report. Table 2.1 summarizes the influential institutional features of the two commissions on the Gagauz.

⁹⁸ I acknowledge the help of Andrei Semenov in translating these handwritten notes. See Bulgar Archives, *[Handwritten Minutes of Gagauz Halkı Executive Council Meetings]*, February-March 1990.

Table 2.1 Effects of Soviet Commissions on the Gagauz

<i>Rules and Procedures</i>	<i>Soviet of Nationalities (Nationality Commission)</i>	<i>Moldavian SSR (Puşcaş Commission)</i>
Committee Consideration	+	+
Minority Allocation	+	+
Deliberation Speed	n/a	+
Minority Report	n/a	+
Total Effect	+	+

In the end, the inclusive Soviet handling of the Gagauz issue showed that diffusing agenda control created a positive atmosphere of accommodation for the minority nationality. Remarkably, this happened even when Gorbachev and the Soviet leadership did not favour meeting Gagauz demands for autonomy. Both Soviet commissions gave a voice to the Gagauz minority and confidence that a political solution was possible. This experience confirmed the Gagauz willingness to work within the system in pursuit of a national-territorial structure.⁹⁹

In the next chapter, I examine how well the new parliament in Moldova accommodated Gagauz demands. After the Puşcaş Commission dissolved, the 1990 republic-level parliamentary elections were held. For the Gagauz, the elections provided a new path by which they could press their demands. The Gagauz commitment to pursue the “parliamentary way” was evident as they mobilized their resources to win seats in the elections in order to continue their quest for autonomy.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3: AGENDA CONTROL AND SEPARATION: 1990

3.1 Introduction

The Gagauz separation from Moldova was not an inevitable consequence of Gorbachev's reforms and the transformation of the Soviet Union. As described in Chapter Two, the institutions of the Soviet Union were surprisingly accommodating to the Gagauz concerns. It was Gorbachev's reforms which allowed the Gagauz to organize their movement and push for the creation of a special commission to explore the feasibility of Gagauz autonomy. Instead of becoming disengaged, the Gagauz were fully engaged in the political system—working on the Pușcaș Commission, submitting names for the February 1990 parliamentary elections, and meeting with senior officials. This approach changed with the transfer of power in Moldova to the new parliament. Less than six months after the election, the Gagauz announced their declaration of independence from the Republic of Moldova.

In this chapter, I investigate the institutional features of Moldova's political regime, which will help to explain the separation of the Gagauz from Moldova. I begin by describing the relevant political actors and their views on the Gagauz question. These actors included the parliament's leadership, commissions, and political parties. The focus is on how these political actors used agenda control to govern and produce policy outcomes. With this framework, I detail the events of 1990 and identify the effects of specific institutional features on Moldova's handling of the Gagauz.

A central argument of this narrative is that the manner by which political actors controlled legislative bodies impacted on the state's ability to accommodate minority demands. Moldova's Popular Front leaders effectively controlled parliament and refused to work for a compromise solution on the question of Gagauz autonomy. I argue that Moldova's majority failed to meet sufficiently the needs of the Gagauz minority. As a result,

Gagauz leaders felt excluded and sought alternative means to secure their demands for autonomy.

3.2 The Separation of the Gagauz

When the Puşcaş Commission finished its study of autonomy for the Gagauz, republic-level parliamentary elections were held. The second session of the USSR Congress of People's Deputies had approved amendments to the Soviet constitution in December 1989 that allowed for elections in the republics in the spring of 1990. As part of Gorbachev's reforms, the Soviet Union had gradually decentralized decision-making to local bodies and reduced the Communist Party's role in governing. This set the stage for legislative elections which abolished provisions that reserved seats for the CPSU and affiliated public organizations.¹ Through the elections, informal groups gained real agenda power in the republics. This further eroded the Communist Party's capacity to play a dominant role in the country's politics.²

Two effects of Gorbachev's reforms changed the allocation of political power: a centre-periphery power shift from central all-Union bodies to the republic, and an intra-republic shift from the Communist Party to the republic-level Supreme Soviet. With the February 1990 elections, a nationalist Popular Front movement was swept into power in Moldova's Supreme Soviet. In many respects, these Moldovans should have been very sympathetic to the Gagauz request to develop their own culture and language. Both nationalities had suffered the harmful effects of Russification and wanted to protect key elements of their national identity. The Moldovan nationalists decided to revamp the republic political structures and make the newly elected parliament responsive to Moldovan issues. The Gagauz wanted to revamp the structure of the republic and create a new autonomous

¹ Jeffrey W. Hahn, "State Institutions in Transition," in *Developments in Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics*, ed. Stephen White, et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 104.

² White, Gill, and Slider, *The Politics of Transition: Shaping a Post-Soviet Future*, 135.

region to be responsive to Gagauz issues. The inability to reach a compromise solution created a situation ripe for conflict.

3.2.1 Political Actors and Agenda Setters

In this section, I examine the political actors and agenda setters in Moldova which dealt with the Gagauz issue. The spring 1990 elections in Moldova produced the most significant actor in Moldova: the newly elected parliament. I look at the organization of the parliament, including the parliamentary chairman, the committees (commissions), and the Popular Front party.

MOLDOVA'S PARLIAMENT

The spring 1990 parliamentary elections occurred as republics were developing a growing sense of autonomy from the dominant centre. Due to the election, the republic-level parliament gained a new role in the agenda-setting process. Previously, republic-level legislative institutions had minimal legitimacy. The MSSR Supreme Soviet had been a rubber-stamp state institution which endorsed decisions made by the Party. Activity in this legislative body, like Soviets of all levels, was largely showmanship.³ The hierarchical Communist Party of the Soviet Union had used these republic-level structures to implement policy from above. This started to change with the arrival of "de facto pluralism" as a consequence of Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost reforms.⁴ The 1990 election transformed the republic-level Supreme Soviet into a real working parliament.

Three reasons explain the political change which occurred in Moldova and many other republics. First, the elections for the republic-level parliament were held in a reasonably democratic manner. Multiple independent candidates were allowed to stand in 373 of Moldova's 380 electoral districts. It gave the newly elected deputies from Moldova

³ For a general view of all Soviets, see Hahn, "State Institutions in Transition."

⁴ Brown, ed., *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, 370.

and other republics a “stronger claim to legitimacy” than the deputies of the USSR Supreme Soviet.⁵

Second, Moldova’s Communist Party lost its provisions for guaranteed seats due to changes in the electoral law. The competitive elections allowed deputies to win their seat based on popular support rather than Party support. This was a significant departure; the mandate of a deputy was no longer determined by the Communist Party. Consequently, the elections shifted power from the Communist Party to the newly elected legislature.

Third, a united majority of deputies emerged in support of the Popular Front of Moldova’s goals. The Popular Front was a group of nationalist Moldovans who wanted increased authority and power for republic-level government and legislative bodies. The Popular Front’s influence generally came at the expense of the Communist Party which saw its control dwindle.⁶ In Moldova’s parliament, Popular Front deputies combined with moderate Communist Party deputies to give reformers a majority of seats.⁷ Article 6 of the Moldavian SSR constitution had stated that the “Communist Party of the Soviet Union is the leading and guiding force of Soviet society.” In the first month of the new parliament’s work, the constitution was amended to remove the Communist Party’s leading role. A non-communist government was established in Moldova, as well as in the Baltic republics, Armenia, and Georgia.⁸

The demographic breakdown of Moldova’s new parliament reflected these changes. Table 3.1 shows the percentage of deputies for each nationality compared to the percentage of each nationality in the population.

⁵ Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, 382.

⁶ White, Gill, and Slider, *The Politics of Transition: Shaping a Post-Soviet Future*, 98.

⁷ FBIS, “Moldavian Election Results Summarized,” *Moscow Domestic Service*, (22 March 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-073, 16 April 1990n; King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 146.

⁸ White, Gill, and Slider, *The Politics of Transition: Shaping a Post-Soviet Future*, 82. In Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, the opposition captured between 25%-40%. See Remington, “Towards a Participatory Politics?,” 171.

Table 3.1 Nationality of Parliamentary Deputies in Moldova (1990)⁹

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Number of total deputies</i>	<i>Percentage of deputies</i>	<i>Percentage of total population</i>
Moldovan	254	69.2 %	63.9 %
Russian	57	15.5 %	12.8 %
Ukrainian	35	9.6 %	14.2 %
Gagauz	12	3.3 %	3.5 %
Bulgarian	8	2.2 %	2.0 %

The Gagauz captured twelve seats which almost matched their representation in the population; ethnic Moldovan deputies consisted of nearly seventy percent of the parliament.¹⁰ While the new parliament was representative of Moldova's multi-national population, it was not the ideal body for the Gagauz to exert their will. An important factor for the Gagauz was how Moldovans viewed the idea of autonomy for the Gagauz. One of the most influential opinions was that of the parliamentary chairman.

PARLIAMENTARY CHAIRMAN

When the new parliament formed in April 1990, one of the first orders of business was to elect a new speaker or chairman. The two candidates were Mircea Snegur and Petr Lucinschi, both representing a new generation of Moldovan leadership. Snegur was chairman of the presidium of the MSSR Supreme Soviet, having replaced Alexandru Mokuș the previous July. Lucinschi was the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Moldavian Communist Party, having replaced Simeon Grossu the previous November. Both candidates attempted to reach across ethnic divisions while still participating in public

⁹ Crowther, "The Politics of Democratization in Postcommunist Moldova," 294.

¹⁰ Ibid. Of the 45 Gagauz nominees (3% of the total), 12 Gagauz deputies were elected or 3.3% of the total seats.

assemblies organized by the Popular Front.¹¹ Snegur won by 36 votes in a closed ballot of the 370-seat body.¹² Both Snegur and Lucinschi continued to be dominant players in Moldovan politics for the next six years.¹³

Mircea Snegur was part of the new generation of Moldovan officials who could sense the growing power of the Popular Front, and he became known as an advocate of their demands in Moldova's political circles.¹⁴ Snegur had risen through the ranks of the Communist Party, from First Secretary of the Chişinău City Party Committee in 1986 to an appointment as chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in July 1989. In 1990, he remained a Communist but was sympathetic to the Popular Front views.¹⁵

Snegur had staked himself out as a moderate, somewhere between the conservative Communists and the pan-Romanian nationalists.¹⁶ Though a Communist, he was no longer dependent on the First Secretary of the Communist Party for support. But, he was not a member of the Popular Front's leadership, and he often (though not always) stayed above their nationalist rhetoric. Consequently, Snegur was not beholden to any particular group when he was elected by the deputies in the competitive contest for parliamentary chairman.

Regarding Gagauz demands, Snegur publicly supported a legislative solution. In a July 1990 nationally broadcast speech which was subsequently published in the republic newspaper, Snegur stated the solution for Gagauz problems must come by a "parliamentary method."¹⁷ He said this solution would preserve and develop the language and culture of the Gagauz at the same time as solving similar problems facing the Moldovan people. In the

¹¹ FBIS, "Without Confrontation," *Izvestiya*, (13 February 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-039, 27 February 1990t.

¹² Nedelya, "Stolknovenie Aisbergov: Zametki S Sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR," 14-20 May 1990. Only 370 seats of the 380 were filled.

¹³ Lucinschi continued to serve as First Secretary and attempted to restore power to the Communist Party in Moldova. He eventually became the Parliamentary Chairman then the second President of the Republic of Moldova.

¹⁴ King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 134-38.

¹⁵ A day after Snegur's election as chairman of the new parliament he spoke at a Popular Front rally.

¹⁶ Charles King, "Moldovan Identity and the Politics of Pan-Romanianism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994), 357.

¹⁷ Mircea Snegur, "Narod Zhdet Prakticheskikh Deistvii," *Sovetskaya Moldaviya*, 24 July 1990.

broadcast, he asked the Gagauz for their full support of the legislative process. He stated that Moldova was prepared to resolve Gagauz problems so that they could exist in harmony.

However, he warned the Gagauz about those leaders who had fabricated the need for autonomy. At that time, Snegur argued that the problems facing the Gagauz could be blamed on the Stalinist policies of the past and did not need to be solved with a national-territorial structure.¹⁸ While discouraging autonomy but advocating a parliamentary method, Snegur brought into focus the importance of giving the Gagauz a voice on the legislative agenda.

COMMISSIONS

In the newly empowered parliament, legislative work gradually began to be carried out by 15 permanent commissions, each having authority in specified functional areas.¹⁹ The commissions could write legislation in their areas and then submit it to the entire body for approval or amendment. In practice, Moldova's commissions did not require policy specialization, had limited staff support, and lacked real agenda-setting power. The government took the leading role in generating legislative drafts.²⁰

A special parliamentary commission was formed to evaluate the issue of a national autonomous region for the Gagauz. The decision was made to continue the work of the Pușcaș Commission by creating a "Joint Commission" out of two standing parliamentary commissions. The recommendation drafted by the Joint Commission would then be considered by the full parliament which was controlled by the Popular Front.

This development did not benefit the Gagauz. The Joint Commission was co-led by the two standing parliamentary commission chairmen, Mihail Cotorobai and Alexandru Arseni. Neither Cotorobai nor Arseni supported the formation of a national-territorial

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Crowther and Roper, "A Comparative Analysis of Institutional Development in the Romanian and Moldovan Legislatures," 144-45.

²⁰ Roper, "The Impact of Moldovan Parliamentary Committee on the Process of Institutionalization." During the first four sessions of the 1994 parliament, 78% of the legislation was initiated by the government.

structure. Cotorobai believed that the word 'Gagauz' originated from "Gagautz" which meant "traitor," as the Gagauz had betrayed the Turks through their conversion to Christianity.²¹ He also argued that the Gagauz did not have the right of self-determination.²² The other chairman, Arseni, viewed the Gagauz as an ethnic group who had no claim on the territory which belonged to the Romanian nation.²³ In general these views represented the Popular Front and their leadership.

PARTIES

When the newly elected parliament convened, Moldovan deputies of the Popular Front of Moldova formed the "Moldovan Bloc" which attracted approximately 65% of the 370 deputies. This bloc combined Popular Front candidates and moderate communists.²⁴ Because the Moldovan Bloc represented such a wide range of interests, it only lasted a year.²⁵ It was like many of Moldova's political parties which had difficulty developing a sense of discipline and loyalty. However, in 1990 it was the Moldovan Bloc that formed the new government and controlled the leading bodies of the parliament.²⁶

Of the remaining 35%, most of the deputies were a mixture of non-Moldovans (Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians and Gagauz) with a few described as conservative Moldovans.²⁷ One group of deputies from the Russian *Edinstvo* movement formed a political

²¹ Mihai Cotorobai, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 23 September 2004.

²² Mihai Cotorobai, "Izlozhenie Motivov K Proektu Zakona 'Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Avtonomnogo Administrativno-Territorial'nogo Okruga Gagauz Eri'," *Nezavisimaya Moldova*, 25 May 1993.

²³ Alexandru Arseni, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 18 November 2005. To be fair, Arseni was not prejudiced against the Gagauz as his wife was Gagauz. He looked at the Gagauz through his own legal definition of an ethnic minority.

²⁴ Nedelya, "Stolknoenie Aisbergov: Zametki S Sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR." A Russian deputy/scholar also estimated the Popular Front strength at 65%. See Vladimir Solonar and Vladimir Bruter, "Russians in Moldova," in *The New Russian Diaspora: Russian Minorities in the Former Soviet Republics*, ed. Vladimir Shlapentokh, et al. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 83.

²⁵ By the fall of 1991, the Popular Front would declare itself as part of the opposition as it splintered into different parties. See *Nezavisimaya Moldova*, "Deklaratsiia Narodnogo Fronta Moldovy O Prezidentskikh Vyborakh V Respublike Moldova," 24 October 1991a.

²⁶ Solonar and Bruter, "Russians in Moldova," 83.

²⁷ Crowther, "The Politics of Democratization in Postcommunist Moldova," 294; Nedelya, "Stolknoenie Aisbergov: Zametki S Sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR.," Solonar and Bruter, "Russians in Moldova," 84.

party called "Soviet Moldavia."²⁸ Soviet Moldavia had around 60 supporters, including most of the Russian deputies. This group supported stronger rights for Moldova's national minorities, including autonomy for the Gagauz.

Of the 12 deputies elected to represent Gagauz regions, 10 were members of the Provisional Committee and Gagauz Halkı, calling themselves the "Budzhac group."²⁹ This electoral coup enabled the Gagauz to press for implementation of their demands directly in the new parliament. The Gagauz leadership waited to proceed with the establishment of the Gagauz ASSR until the newly elected Gagauz delegates had worked with the Popular Front to explore the "parliamentary way."³⁰

SUMMARY

Gorbachev's reforms allowed competitive elections for the Moldavian SSR Supreme Soviet which previously had acted under the guidance of the Communist Party. The result was a major change in the parliament's role within the republic. The parliament could operate independent of Moscow and make policy on behalf of the republic. Republic-level positions such as the parliamentary chairman and parliamentary commissions gained newfound importance. Moldova's Popular Front won a substantial number of seats and even more supporters. For the Gagauz, these new republic-level actors would play the decisive role regarding the creation of Gagauz autonomy or any alternative policy outcome.

²⁸ See William Crowther, "Nationalism and Political Transformation in Moldova," in *Studies in Moldovan: The History, Culture, Language and Contemporary Politics of the People of Moldova*, ed. Donald L. Dyer (Boulder: East European Monographs; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1996), 35. On May 22, 1989, some of these non-Moldovan deputies were harassed and attacked by Moldovan crowds standing around parliament. Reportedly most of them returned to parliament except for the deputies from Transnistria. See Moscow News, "Moldavia: Confrontation and Reform," (17-24 June 1990), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-128, 3 July 1990.

²⁹ TASS, "Coverage of Crisis Situation in Gagauz Region," (30 October 1990), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-210, 30 October 1990a.

³⁰ Bulgar Archives, [*Handwritten Minutes of Gagauz Halkı Executive Council Meetings*].

3.2.2 *Agenda Control and Policy Outcomes*

The ability of parliament to produce policy stemmed from how the control of the legislative agenda was allocated.³¹ Here I examine the legislative features which determined the amount of agenda control available to the political actors. To do this, I focus on three key aspects of legislative governance: the composition of the legislative majority, the number and influence of legislative veto players, and the level of party discipline.

MAJORITY RULE

With a majority of the deputies' support, Popular Front leaders filled key agenda-setting positions within Moldova's parliament. Using the constitutional provisions of Chapter 11 of the MSSR constitution, it was the members of the presidium who were the key agenda setters in parliament. The presidium was elected in a plenary session to carry out the legislative functions when the parliament was not in session. The presidium was led by the parliamentary chairman and two deputies. The Popular Front gained an important position of authority when Ion Hadarca, chairman of the Popular Front organization, was elected to be the first deputy parliamentary chairman. The chairman, Mircea Snegur, and the other deputy chairman, Victor Pușcaș, were considered Popular Front supporters as well.

The Popular Front also secured their control over parliamentary commissions. Their leaders nominated Popular Front deputies and supporters to become Permanent Commission Chairmen. Though estimates of the Popular Front's control of parliament were imprecise, one indication was the fact that ethnic Moldovan deputies accounted for 69.2% of the deputies in parliament but held 83.3% of the legislative leadership positions.³² All 15 commission chairmen and vice-chairmen were of Moldovan nationality and said to be

³¹ Moser, "The Impact of Legislative Institutions on Public Policy: A Survey," 12.

³² Approximately 85% of Moldova's deputies were elected as members of the Communist Party. As the Party's influence waned, many deputies worked to further the cause of the Popular Front. Official party affiliation had little impact on deputy voting behaviour. See Crowther and Roper, "A Comparative Analysis of Institutional Development in the Romanian and Moldovan Legislatures," 145.

Popular Front supporters.³³ This was to be expected as the leadership of the parliament—Snegur, Hadarca, and Pușcaș—put forward deputies' names to fill chairmen positions which were then approved by the parliament.³⁴ By controlling the leadership, the Popular Front was able to exert its rule over the commissions.

The Popular Front gained even more control a few months after the new parliament opened. Prime Minister Petru Pascaru (known then as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers) resigned in May 1990.³⁵ Snegur nominated Mircea Druc as his replacement, who had risen from within the ranks of the Popular Front leadership. In August 1990, Snegur was voted as the president of the Republic. He was replaced as chairman of the parliament by one of the most prominent Popular Front leaders, Alexandru Mosanu. By the fall of 1990, the Popular Front leaders occupied the most powerful positions in government and the parliament: the prime minister, parliamentary chairman, and the chairman's first deputy.

By gaining positions of authority within the parliament's leadership, the Popular Front quickly expanded its ability to exert majority rule. If Moldova's Popular Front used their majority to benefit both Moldovans and minority groups, we would expect the Gagauz to remain engaged.³⁶ For example, majorities can use certain procedures to accommodate minority groups, such as: (1) fair allocation of committee chairmanship and member assignments; (2) inclusion of minority reports with the official committee report; and (3) a

³³ P. K. Lucinschi, "Politicheskii Doklad Tsk O Deiatel'nosti Kompartii Moldavii I Programme Ee Obnovleniia," *Sovetskaya Moldaviya*, 18 May 1990; Solonar and Bruter, "Russians in Moldova," 84. This was true during the first year of parliament.

³⁴ Constitutional provisions (Article 112) dictated that the entire parliament elect the permanent commission members.

³⁵ Vera Tolz, "The USSR This Week," *Radio Liberty Report on the USSR* 2, no. 22 (1990), 37. Pascaru was appointed chairman of the Council of Ministers (prime minister) on 10 January 1990. See William Crowther, "Moldova: Caught between Nation and Empire," in *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, ed. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997a), 341.

³⁶ Sartori, "Will Democracy Kill Democracy? Decision-Making by Majorities and by Committees."; Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*.

slow deliberate speed when considering legislative proposals.³⁷ If the Popular Front did not use these commission procedures to accommodate the Gagauz, a negative effect would be expected. The key would be how the Popular Front used their majority rule.

VETO PLAYERS

The ability of Moldova's agenda setters to produce laws and policy depended on their control of the legislative process. This control was threatened by veto players, or those actors whose support was necessary to successfully pass legislative proposals. With a strong majority in the parliament, the Popular Front did not face many veto players. On issues which required a supermajority for passage, veto players representing a coalition of conservative communists and non-Moldovan deputies prevailed against the Popular Front. For example, the vote to change the name of Moldova's new parliament indicated the strength of veto players within the legislature. In the MSSR constitution, Article 97 designated that the "supreme organ of state power" was the "Supreme Soviet of the MSSR."³⁸ The Popular Front wanted to rename the parliament 'Sfatul Țării,' the name of the parliamentary body which voted in 1918 for Bessarabia to join Romania. It was an emotional issue which opponents feared as another attempt to "Rumanianize" Moldova. The measure failed by 12 votes of the required two-thirds majority necessary for constitutional changes in the 370-member parliament.

When a supermajority was not required, veto players were not influential. Popular Front leaders and their supporters occupied nearly all of the positions of authority within the parliament. Any opposition which did form could do little to hinder the Popular Front's

³⁷ Ingvar Mattson and Kaare Strøm, "Parliamentary Committees," in *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, ed. Herbert Döring (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag; St. Martin's Press, 1995), 278-83; Mueller, *Public Choice II: A Revised Edition of Public Choice*, 53. For example, minority committee chairs is a provision of Sweden's parliament.

³⁸ Feldbrugge, *The Constitutions of the USSR and the Union Republics: Analysis, Texts, Reports*, 302-03.

pursuit of the legislative agenda. On the issue of Gagauz autonomy, the small number of Gagauz deputies had little power to stop unfavourable legislation from being considered.

Theoretically, a strong majority unchecked by veto players greatly decreases the need for compromise or tradeoffs. This reduces the risk of stalemate and gridlock but increases the problems of majoritarianism. As noted by Cox and McCubbins (2001):

“As a society becomes more heterogeneous, if the polity has a very small number of effective vetoes the risk of inequality and under representation will increase. Thus, the consequences of these institutional tradeoffs increase with social diversity, so understanding these consequences is crucially important.”³⁹

One of these consequences would be that a small number of weak veto players would enable agenda setters to ignore the demands of minority voices and push through policies that favoured the majority. Applying this premise to Moldova, a reasonable prediction would be that the Popular Front, dominated by Moldovans, would disregard the demands of the Gagauz in favour of divisive legislation which gave a priority to Moldovan interests.⁴⁰

However, before producing legislation, the Popular Front leadership would need to exert control over individual deputies to garner the necessary votes. This would be determined by the discipline of the major political parties.

PARTY DISCIPLINE

To produce party outcomes consistently, majority leaders needed disciplined parties to extend their will onto the rank-and-file deputies.⁴¹ This was especially true when leaders needed votes to pass delicate legislation which had been negotiated outside of the plenary session. In Moldova, the majority Popular Front did not have the means by which to enforce discipline. There were several reasons for this weakness even when the Popular Front

³⁹ Cox and McCubbins, "The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes," 63.

⁴⁰ Ibid; Döring, ed., *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, 45.

⁴¹ Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*, 19.

appeared to hold an absolute majority. First, the Popular Front was a political movement as opposed to a political party. While the Popular Front enjoyed the support of approximately 65% of the 370 deputies, this represented a mixture of Popular Front candidates and deputies elected as moderate communists.⁴² For many of these deputies their party allegiance had completely disappeared and they lacked any party affiliation.⁴³

Second, Moldova's parliament had not established formal party structures and rules. As a result, party leaders did not have the means by which to coerce deputies into voting for contentious legislation. Of significance, parliamentary rules did not give party leaders any authority to force deputies out of parliamentary leadership positions and replace them with more loyal deputies. Deputies were confirmed by the full parliament. In fact, deputies could easily leave one party and join another. Parties had little to offer deputies by way of resources or benefits. Parties did not influence a deputy's chances for re-election as the standing electoral law returned deputies by popular vote in single-member districts. Party leaders had influence only when those deputies in leadership positions continued to support the party's agenda.

If the Gagauz did negotiate a compromise within a commission, majority party leaders would be hard pressed to find the necessary votes among the nationalist Moldovan deputies to support the measure when brought to the floor for debate. As party leaders did not have protective parliamentary procedures at their disposal, sensitive bills were vulnerable to defeat.⁴⁴ The lack of party discipline made accommodation of the Gagauz even more unlikely. I now examine how these institutional features affected Moldova's political actors as they considered Gagauz demands.

⁴² See Solonar and Bruter, "Russians in Moldova," 83.

⁴³ Crowther, "The Politics of Ethno-National Mobilization: Nationalism and Reform in Soviet Moldavia," 199. See Lucinschi's acknowledgment of weak allegiance in Rabochaya Tribuna, "Politika Zdravogo Smysla."

⁴⁴ For a discussion on protective parliamentary procedures, see John D. Huber, "Restrictive Legislative Procedures in France and the United States," *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 3 (1992).

3.2.3 *An Empowered Moldova*

BACKGROUND

The March 1989 elections for the Congress of People's Deputies signalled a drop in Communist Party support by effectively ending the political monopoly of the Party in Soviet society and more importantly, at the republic-level.⁴⁵ Reformers had gained legitimacy with elected positions within a state political structure. In Moldova, the old guard's influence continued to decline as a moderate party leader, Mircea Snegur, was named as the new chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in July 1989. Snegur was part of the new generation of Moldovan officials who could sense the growing power of the Popular Front and advocated their demands in Moldova.⁴⁶ Snegur was noticeably less committed to the Communist Party, which had tried to remain neutral in the republic-wide debate about an official language.

On 31 August 1989 Moldova passed the language law declaring Moldovan as the state language. With the passage of the law, the Communist Party found itself in a no-win situation. Even when the Party reluctantly supported the language law the Popular Front still doubted their devotion to the cause of a national rebirth. When the Communist Party gave in to Moldovan demands to increase the profile of the Moldovan language, it was branded as pandering to nationalism by the non-Moldovan nationalities. Moderate party members argued for more reforms in the name of perestroika and in support of the Popular Front while more conservative members resisted any changes. This rift within the Party only helped weaken it.

Grossu as First Secretary of the Communist Party had been the most powerful political figure in Moldova. By the fall of 1989, his control of the Party and the Republic was

⁴⁵ Victor Danilenko, "Electoral Reform," in *Perestroika-Era Politics: The New Soviet Legislature and Gorbachev's Political Reforms*, ed. Robert T. Huber and Donald R. Kelley (Armonk, NY; London: Sharpe, 1991).

⁴⁶ King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 134-38.

in question. At Moldova's Communist Party Plenum held in September 1989, Grossu admitted that the party's influence was insufficient to tackle the scope of problems in Moldova. Party members including those in the central committee questioned the Party's leadership.⁴⁷ Less than two months later Grossu was removed from power and replaced by Petru Lucinschi. However, the parliamentary elections further marginalized the Communist Party making the post of First Secretary increasingly irrelevant.

THE POPULAR FRONT AND THE NEW PARLIAMENT

After the 1990 election, the Popular Front leadership promptly moved forward to set the new parliament's agenda according to their own priorities. Within the first few days, the parliament became embroiled in divisive national issues. The official status of several deputies initially dominated the debate as non-Moldovan deputies accused the parliamentary committee of bias when it refused to accept the credentials of some deputies from the Russian *Edinstvo* movement.⁴⁸ The parliament then voted to change the time zone to mark a break from Moscow and put Moldova in central European time with Romania. It also reorganized the republic government by replacing the previous 50 ministries with only 17. The Popular Front agenda steadily achieved one legislative success after another.

At times the parliament resembled the 'tyranny of the majority' as the Popular Front pushed through legislation without effective veto players to force any form of compromise. For example, when the parliament debated the adoption of the blue-yellow-red tricolour flag used by Romania, the chairman of parliament refused to give the floor to the opponents of the measure.⁴⁹ The Popular Front leadership raised the nationalist tone further by pushing parliament to adopt a declaration of sovereignty as far-reaching as any other which had been

⁴⁷ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Ob Obshchesvenno-Politicheskoi Obstanovke, Mezhnatsional'nykh Otnosheniiakh I Zadachakh Partiinykh Organizatsii Respubliki, Vytakaiushchikh Iz Reshenii Sentiabr'skovo (1989 G.) Plenuma Tsk Kpss."

⁴⁸ Nedelya, "Stolknovenie Aisbergov: Zametki S Sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR."

⁴⁹ Ibid.

adopted by other Union republics.⁵⁰ The law stated that Moldovan law superseded Soviet law. The question of sovereignty shifted to a question of citizenship. One of the Popular Front leaders declared on the floor of parliament that Moldova was not a multi-national republic. He contended that no one had authorized non-Moldovans to represent their peoples in parliament.⁵¹ The parliament also voted to cancel the celebrations scheduled for June 28, the date when Moldova was incorporated into the USSR. In this emotional, nationalist atmosphere the Gagauz attempted to put their question on the legislative agenda.

Understanding that Popular Front leaders had control of the parliamentary agenda, Gagauz leaders approached the Popular Front directly to negotiate an agreement.⁵² The Gagauz argued that their nationality had suffered under the Communist yoke just as the Moldovans. Instead of trying to defend Soviet practices, Gagauz deputies explained to the Popular Front leadership that Moldovans and Gagauz shared a similar perspective and suffered from the same problems.⁵³ Gagauz and Popular Front leaders met several times to discuss the future structure of Moldova and to find a mutually agreeable solution.⁵⁴ One Gagauz deputy argued, "The Soviet Union was breaking apart and we, the Gagauz, wanted to have our piece of cake, but not bigger than we could swallow."⁵⁵ The Gagauz deputies met regularly with Snegur in order to discuss the Gagauz question.⁵⁶ Snegur sympathized with the Gagauz that their culture had also suffered and he also wanted to find a "parliamentary solution."⁵⁷ Due to these direct meetings, both Snegur and the parliamentary leaders allowed the Gagauz question to be considered.

⁵⁰ Chinn and Roper, "Ethnic Mobilization and Reactive Nationalism: The Case of Moldova," 301.

⁵¹ Nedelya, "Stolknovenie Aisbergov: Zametki S Sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR."

⁵² Bulgar Archives, [*Handwritten Minutes of Gagauz Halki Executive Council Meetings*].

⁵³ Kapanji, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁴ Kendigelian, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁵ Kapanji, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁶ Snegur, "Narod Zhdet Prakticheskikh Deistvii."

⁵⁷ Ibid.

On the third day of the legislative session, the Gagauz deputies pushed to have Gagauz autonomy on the legislative agenda.⁵⁸ After a heated debate within the parliament, it was placed onto the already crowded agenda.⁵⁹ Putting the Gagauz question on the parliamentary agenda had significant consequences. One was that it gave the pursuit of autonomy a second life after the inconsequential Pușcaș Commission. Another was that it placed the responsibility to handle the question directly on the parliament instead of on all-Union bodies like the USSR Supreme Soviet. Lastly, the manner in which the Gagauz concerns were treated affected the Gagauz and their trust that the parliamentary way within Moldova was a productive path for them to take.

Parliamentary leaders referred the Gagauz question to a special parliamentary commission. Article 112 of Moldova's constitution gave the parliament the right to create "commissions on any question."⁶⁰ This Joint Commission was made up of two standing parliamentary commissions: the Commission on Nationality and Inter-ethnic Relations and the Commission on Local Self-Administration and Local Economy. The chairman of the Nationality Interethnic Relations Commission was a newly elected deputy, Alexandru Arseni. Arseni was a Moldovan by nationality and lawyer by profession. Arseni was then a supporter of the Popular Front and later became leader of one of the breakaway parties called the Democratic Labour Party.⁶¹ The chairman of the Local Self-Administration and Local Economy Commission was another newly elected deputy and Popular Front supporter, Mihail Cotorobai. Cotorobai was also a Moldovan and lawyer who worked as a professor of law at

⁵⁸ Nedelya, "Stolknovenie Aisbergov: Zametki S Sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta Moldavskoi SSR."

⁵⁹ TASS, "Reportage on Moldavian Supreme Soviet Session," (19 April 1990), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-077, 20 April 1990d.

⁶⁰ Feldbrugge, *The Constitutions of the USSR and the Union Republics: Analysis, Texts, Reports*, 311.

⁶¹ FBIS, "Parliament Handling of Separatism Assailed," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (25 June 1993), translated in FBIS JPRS Report, FBIS-USR-93-090, 19 July 1993l.

Moldovan State University.⁶² Both were appointed chairmen of their respective commissions in May 1990 and served for the remainder of the parliament in those positions.

The Joint Commission operated under a parliamentary mandate to prepare a recommendation on the formation of a national-territorial structure for the Gagauz within two months. With their mandate came constitutional authority to request information and assistance from republic-level government agencies. Using this authority they held meetings to consider the material collected by the Puşcaş Commission and add to it by seeking the professional opinions of education officials, historians, and legal experts. Additional material was presented by the Gagauz deputies along with proposals from twenty additional deputies from other parliamentary commissions (or committees). In total, forty-three cities, towns, and villages were visited in the region of the proposed Gagauz ASSR to discuss the matter with local citizens. Based on the material collected, testimonies given, and interviews conducted, the Joint Commission wrote their recommendation.⁶³

The Gagauz were hopeful that a compromise agreement on autonomy was possible. On one hand, the commission provided an opportunity for the Gagauz to present their case. It held several formal meetings, conducted field work, extended an open invitation for proposals, and sought solicitations of expert advice. Conversely, only one ethnic Gagauz deputy was on the commission.⁶⁴ This minimized the Gagauz voice on the issue and greatly limited Gagauz access to the closed proceedings. The lack of Gagauz representation on the Joint Commission reduced the chances of the two sides to find a compromise solution. Without influence within the commission, the Gagauz sought to apply external pressure.

⁶² Cotorobai later became a judge on Moldova's Constitutional Court and served from 1996 to 2002. See Constitutional Court, *Konstitutsionnyi Sud Respublika Moldova -- 10 Let Deiatel'nosti*, 19.

⁶³ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Zakliuchenie Postoiannykh Komissii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova Po Natsional'nykh Voprosam, Po Voprosam Mestnogo Samoupravleniia I Mestnogo Khoziaistva O Deiatel'nosti Komissii Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova Po Izucheniiu Zaprosov Obrashchenii Ob Obrazovanii Avtonomii Gagauzskogo Naroda V SSR Moldova," 5 August 1990i.

⁶⁴ The deputy was Vladimir Kapanji. Kapanji was not part of the senior Gagauz leadership at this time.

Four days prior to the commission's report date, the Gagauz held an 'Extraordinary Congress' to emphasize their commitment to obtaining autonomy.

On Sunday, 22 July 1990, the Gagauz Extraordinary Congress came together to convince Moldova's leaders that creating an autonomous structure for the Gagauz was the best solution.⁶⁵ Over four hundred Gagauz delegates met in this last bid effort to salvage the 'parliamentary way.' The Gagauz speakers noted the uphill battle before them as some Moldovan parliamentary deputies and government officials had refused to recognize the "legitimate" Gagauz demand for autonomy.⁶⁶ However, even with the Popular Front's control of the parliament's agenda, the Gagauz leaders specifically expressed hope that the parliamentary leaders would resolve the Gagauz problem by creating the Gagauz Autonomous Republic. In the minds of the Gagauz, an autonomous republic *inside* Moldova was essential in order to stabilize interethnic relations in the region.⁶⁷ The Gagauz believed that the Popular Front leadership could push through such legislation if they desired. A favourable commission report was the next step towards that goal.

At the July 1990 Congress the Gagauz did not conceal their expectations from Moldova's parliamentary leaders who attended. The Gagauz had already pressed their demands in meetings with both Snegur and the Popular Front. One attendee at the Congress was the Joint Commission Chairman, Alexandru Arseni, who was invited to present the progress of the commission's work.⁶⁸

After the Gagauz leaders spoke, Arseni was given the floor. Arseni argued that national and international standards regulated interethnic relations. In his view, because the Gagauz were originally from Bulgaria and came to Moldova as colonists, they had no right to

⁶⁵ FBIS, "Extraordinary Congress in Komrat," *Molodezh Moldavii*, (26 July 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-157, 14 August 1990g.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Arseni, Personal Interview with Author.

national self-determination or territorial autonomy. Without any right of self-determination, Arseni stated that all the decisions made by the Gagauz Extraordinary Congress would be overruled as illegal by Moldova's parliament.⁶⁹ Arseni felt it was important to tell the Gagauz "how things were."⁷⁰ Not surprisingly, the Gagauz reacted with outrage. Arseni's presentation foretold the commission's conclusions which were published a few days later, and the Gagauz response to those conclusions.

JOINT COMMISSION REPORT

On 26 July 1990, the day of reckoning had come for the Gagauz. The final report of the Joint Commission represented the culmination of a 14-month process which had been started at the USSR Congress of People's Deputies in May 1989. As the parliamentary-sponsored commission had direct access to the legislative agenda, the presentation of the Joint Commission's recommendation signified the final procedure before the measure would be voted on. Given that the Chairmen of the Joint Commission were part of the majority bloc of parliament, the commission's conclusion was very likely to be adopted.⁷¹

Cotorobai and Arseni presented the results of their commission's work. The report included an interpretation of Moldova's history, followed by conclusions on the Gagauz issue, and then recommendations for Moldova's parliament.⁷² The rendition of Moldova's history matched what was generally held by most Moldovan nationalists: Moldova was the national territory of the Moldovan people, formed in 1359 by Stefan Cel Mare, whose ancestors were the Moldovan people. The Gagauz were not indigenous residents of Moldova

⁶⁹ FBIS, "Extraordinary Congress in Komrat."

⁷⁰ Arseni, Personal Interview with Author.

⁷¹ See Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*, 166.

⁷² PARM, *Zakliuchenie Postoiannykh Komissii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova Po Natsional'nykh Voprosam, Po Voprosam Mestnogo Samoupravleniia I Mestnogo Khoziaistva O Deiatel'nosti Komissii Presidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova Po Izucheniiu Zaprosov Nekotorykh Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR I Drugikh Obrashchenii Ob Obrazovanii Avtonomii Gagauzskovo Naroda V SSR Moldova*, 1990c. The commissions report was reprinted in full by the government daily. See Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Zakliuchenie Postoiannykh Komissii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova."

as their homeland was in Bulgaria where the nationality of the Gagauz was formed during the 12th to 17th centuries. Instead, the Gagauz came to Moldova at the invitation of the Russian tsar in order to create a national base on the border zone of the Russian empire. The Gagauz had received the status of colonists with special rights and privileges within the Russian empire in order to ensure their allegiance.⁷³ With that history, the following conclusions were reached:

1. The Gagauz national territory was not within Moldova, a condition necessary for the formation of national-territorial autonomy per “international law.”
2. If a people or nation immigrated to the territory of another people or nation, the immigrants and their descendants comprised an ethnic group within the host country. Consequently, the Gagauz were correctly considered an ethnic group without a legal claim to territorial autonomy within Moldova.
3. The Gagauz problem consisted of a lack of cultural development of their people. The economic problems which existed were the same for all groups in the region which included Bulgarians, Moldovans, and Ukrainians.⁷⁴

The commission then made the following three recommendations to Moldova’s parliament:

1. Accelerate development of a law on citizenship in the Moldavian SSR to ensure the rights of ethnic groups through local self-management to guarantee the development of all ethnic groups within Moldova.
2. Prepare a program for socioeconomic and cultural development to address the problems in the South. One solution was the creation of a single local government for

⁷³ PARM, *Zakliuchenie Postoianniykh Komissii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova*.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

the Bulgarians and Gagauz within the framework of the future administrative territorial reform.

3. Create a department for national minority issues to administer programs for the development of language and culture of the Gagauz and Bulgarians.⁷⁵

Unlike the Puşcaş Commission the Joint Commission findings did not contain a minority report. Arseni and Cotorobai, acting in concert with the preferences of the majority bloc, opted against consideration of an opposing viewpoint.⁷⁶ Instead, the only viewpoint expressed by the Joint Commission represented the Moldovan nationalist opinion. This nationalist view held that Moldova was the exclusive homeland of the Moldovan people; the Gagauz were an ethnic group who arrived as colonists; and the Gagauz homeland was in modern day Bulgaria. With those assumptions, autonomy for the Gagauz was out of the question. Without a minority report, the commission's conclusions were published with a purely Moldovan perspective on the history of the situation, the problem, and proposed solutions.

After the Joint Commission report, the Popular Front leaders in parliament wasted no time in considering the commission's recommendations. The Joint Commission report, signed by Arseni and Cotorobai on 26 July 1990, was confirmed by parliament on 27 July.⁷⁷ Because of the strong majority and a lack of effective veto players, the Popular Front leadership exercised its agenda control, pushed the Gagauz question to the front of the agenda, and passed a resolution confirming the commission's results in just one day. It specifically decreed the annulment of decisions taken by the Gagauz Extraordinary Congress

⁷⁵ Ibid. The commissions report was reprinted in full by the government daily. See *Sovetskaya Moldaviya*, "Zakliuchenie Postoiannykh Komissii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova."

⁷⁶ In systems where a minority viewpoint is allowed, a single conclusion by a commission can be viewed as a sign of consensus.

⁷⁷ PARM, *Avizul Comisiilor Permanente Ale Soveitului Suprem Al R.S.S. Moldova Pentru Problemele Nationale Shi Autoadminstrararea Locala Shi Economia Locala*, signed by A. Arseni and Mihai Cotorobai, 26 July 1990a.

as Arseni had promised during his speech in Comrat.⁷⁸ The parliamentary decree was a resounding rejection of Gagauz demands.

In addition to accepting the commission's conclusions, the parliament adopted their recommendations. Instead of territorial autonomy, the parliament offered to create a single administrative unit for the Gagauz in the new administrative-territorial reform from smaller Soviet *raions* to larger districts or *județ*.⁷⁹ This solution was essentially a limited form of cultural autonomy and minority rights protection within the centralized state.

As the Moldovan plan was not territorial autonomy, this led the Gagauz bloc of deputies to make one last effort at the "parliamentary way." The same day parliament adopted the Joint Commission's findings, the Gagauz deputies presented their proposal to create the Gagauz Autonomous Republic within the Moldavian SSR. This proposal was defeated by approximately 80% of the deputies present.⁸⁰ The next day, the parliamentary session ended. The legislative road for the Gagauz Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic had come to a dead end.

For an issue considered "one of the most painful questions for the republic" it is not surprising that such a short debate produced an undesirable outcome for the Gagauz.⁸¹ The parliamentary leadership opted against a slower, deliberative process which may have resulted in a more compromised position on the Gagauz question. Instead, the Popular Front leadership brought the commission's recommendations onto the floor for a quick vote. The parliament was presented with two options: the commission's recommendations or the Gagauz solution. No middle ground was explored.

⁷⁸ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Postanovlenie Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova O Materialakh Komissii Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova Po Izucheniiu Zaprosov Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR I Drugikh Obrashchenii Ob Obrazovanii Avtonomii Gagauskoi Narodnosti," 5 August 1990f.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ FBIS, "Moldavian Supreme Soviet on Environment, Autonomy," *Moscow Domestic Service*, (28 July 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-146, 30 July 1990o. At that time, the number of Moldovan deputies was a higher percentage than the original 70% because a number of Russian-speaking deputies left the parliament in May.

⁸¹ Izvestiya, "Kurs Na Depolitizatsiiu," 28 July 1990b.

As a result of the parliament's treatment of the autonomy issue, "a sharp break" took place in the relations between the Popular Front leadership and the Gagauz deputies.⁸²

Gagauz leaders felt alienation and disenfranchisement. After the parliament's rejection of a Gagauz autonomous republic, the Gagauz deputies left the parliament and returned to Comrat. The deputies gathered the Provisional Committee and the Gagauz Halkı and moved forward with plans to form the Gagauz Republic.⁸³

Gagauz leaders argued that a legal right existed to make a claim for an autonomous republic outside of Moldova. The Gagauz took note that Moldova's parliament had renounced the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact and the law which formed the Moldavian SSR on August 2, 1940.⁸⁴ Consequently, Gagauz leaders concluded that the MSSR did not have any legal basis for existence and they should not be restrained by Republic-level laws.⁸⁵ With this rationale and no compromise forthcoming, the Gagauz prepared to turn back to Moscow for recognition of their new political structure.

Rumours of Gagauz intentions to declare an independent republic reached the government in Chişinău. In a formal appeal to the people of southern Moldova, the Prime Minister Mircea Druc and Victor Puşcaş, who had retained his position as deputy chairman of the new parliament, appealed for patience.⁸⁶ Both the government and parliament were keen to counter the new Gagauz Congress scheduled for 19 August 1990. The appeal stated that the creation of a national-state formation was unconstitutional and further attempts would be considered illegal. The appeal asked Gagauz leaders not to create autonomous structures or adopt rulings which would undermine the territorial integrity of Moldova.

⁸² Kendigelian, Personal Interview with Author.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Burgudji, Personal Interview with Author; FBIS, "The Gagauz Seek a Compromise."

⁸⁵ FBIS, "Gagauz-Moldovan Situation Becomes Aggravated," *Moscow Television Service--Vremya*, (25 August 1990), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-166, 27 August 1990k. A declaration of independence was declared a year later on August 27, 1991.

⁸⁶ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Obrashchenie K Deputatam."

GAGAUZ DECLARATION OF AN INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC

As described in Chapter One, more than 700 Gagauz deputies from all levels of government gathered in Comrat on 19 August 1990 to proclaim the creation of the Gagauz Republic within the Soviet Union. Led by Stepan Topal, they passed a series of documents which included a declaration of freedom and independence, a system of self-administration within the new Gagauz republic, and a delineation of the borders of the republic, which included three *raions* and portions of two others. From the view of the Gagauz leadership, a unilateral declaration was the only option available after the refusal of Moldova's parliament to acknowledge the Gagauz right to autonomy.⁸⁷

The 19 August Gagauz Congress illuminated how Moldova's Joint Commission had made the Gagauz feel like a disenfranchised minority. The pronouncements from the Congress declared that the Joint Commission's work was undemocratic and unscientific. In the view of the Congress, the Gagauz nationality was an indigenous group who had a territorial right to the region.⁸⁸ Another document of the Congress highlighted that Moldova's parliament not only refused to recognize the right of the Gagauz people for self-determination but then through the Joint Commission report declared the Gagauz to be an ethnic group without their own national territory.⁸⁹ Indignant, the Gagauz focused on how they had been mistreated historically under the Soviet period and how they were now being mistreated by the Moldovans due to the parliament's actions of 26 and 27 July 1990. The Gagauz declared themselves free from any political or legal obligations with regard to the Moldavian SSR. In recognition of their new status, the Congress appealed to the USSR Supreme Soviet presidium to conclude a Union treaty with the new Gagauz Republic.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Kendigelian, Personal Interview with Author.

⁸⁸ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Postanovlenie Prezidiyama Verkhovnogo Soveta."

⁸⁹ FBIS, "The Gagauz Proclaim a Republic," *Selskaya Zhizn*, (21 August 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Review, FBIS-SOV-90-172, 5 September 1990h.

⁹⁰ Ibid; Pravda, "Co Vsemi Vytakaiushchimi..."

Moldova's parliamentary leadership responded by declaring the Gagauz Congress's actions invalid and unconstitutional.⁹¹ A new parliamentary decree had an ominous tone. It called on the government to monitor the activities of the 'Gagauz Independence Movement'; authorized the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the KGB to pursue a criminal investigation of the organizers of the Gagauz Congress; and warned Gagauz leaders that all measures would be taken to stop future illegal activities.⁹² The next day the government issued its own decree to disband the Gagauz Halkı movement due to its illegal acts which had undermined the territorial integrity of Moldova.⁹³ This was followed by a second decree from Moldova's Supreme Soviet presidium signed by Snegur which blamed the Gagauz actions on a group of political adventurers, including deputies from Transnistria, who acted to increase their political support at the expense of Moldova.⁹⁴

Moldova's leaders were unequivocal in their condemnation of the Gagauz attempt to seek external recognition as a republic.⁹⁵ Indeed, they did not take any steps towards reconciliation. Snegur as chairman of Moldova's parliament called an extraordinary session of parliament on 2 September 1990 and attacked the Gagauz and Transnistrian leaders for striving to further their ambitions at the expense of the Moldovan people.⁹⁶ In his rousing nationalistic speech about Moldovan rights and privileges, Snegur rejected Gagauz concerns about the Joint Commission's report on Gagauz autonomy. He reiterated that the Gagauz living on the national territory of Moldova did not have the right to autonomy and dismissed Gagauz claims that they are the indigenous residents of the southern region. He ended his

⁹¹ Pravda, "Co Vsemi Vytakaiushchimi..." As parliament was not in session, the presidium acted on their behalf.

⁹² Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Postanovlenie Prezidiyama Verkhovnogo Soveta."

⁹³ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Postanovlenie Pravitel'stva SSR Moldova O Rospuske Narodnogo Dvizheniia 'Gagauz Khalky'," 23 August 1990c.

⁹⁴ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Postanovlenie Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova O Prichinakh Obostreniia Obshchestvenno-Policheskoi Obstanovki I Mezhnatsional'nykh Otnoshenii V Respublike."

⁹⁵ Pușcaș, a deputy chairman of the Moldovan parliament, condemned the central mass media for their portrayal of the events and laid blame for the actions on the "conservative forces" in the republic and within the Soviet Union. See FBIS, "Gagauz-Moldovan Situation Becomes Aggravated."

⁹⁶ FBIS, "Let Us Protect Our National Dignity."

speech by absolving Chişinău of any responsibility for the destabilizing actions in the republic. He rallied the Moldovans by crying, “Down with the separatist leaders! Not a single acre of our ancestors’ land to satisfy the autonomous ambitions of the aliens!”⁹⁷ Snegur later admitted that he regretted calling the Gagauz “aliens.” As he noted, “It was a lesson even for the president.”⁹⁸

While Snegur’s speech failed to win any supporters among the Gagauz, he did confirm Gagauz suspicions that compromise was unattainable. After Snegur’s speech, parliament issued yet another decree to condemn the leaders of the “Gagauz Independence Movement” and the leaders in Transnistria.⁹⁹ The decree asked the Ministry of Internal Affairs as well as other appropriate government agencies to hold the leaders criminally liable for trying to destabilize the political situation in Moldova.¹⁰⁰ It also included an appeal to the Gagauz population in the south (as well as Russians and Ukrainians in the east) not to support the unconstitutional separatist actions.¹⁰¹

Without a compromise in sight, the Gagauz held another Congress in Comrat on 16 September 1990. Over 700 deputies attended this Second Congress of People’s Deputies where they considered Moldova’s response and pressed forward with the construction of a Gagauz republic. They approved documents prepared by the Provisional Committee which set out to hold elections during the following month. The Congress also adopted an appeal to Gorbachev and the chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Anatoli Lukianov, asking them to support the new republic. A delegation was formed in order to meet personally with the

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ See Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

⁹⁹ Transnistria had followed the Gagauz example and declared themselves an independent republic on 2 September 1990, a few weeks after the Gagauz Congress.

¹⁰⁰ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, “Postanovlenie Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova O Nekotorykh Merakh Po Stabilizatsii Obshchestvenno-Politicheskoi Obstanovki V SSR Moldova.”

¹⁰¹ Ibid. In response to the tensions in Moldova, the parliament voted Snegur as the first President of Moldova in an uncontested ballot on 3 September 1990. See TASS, “Snegur Elected President,” (3 September 1990), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-172, 5 September 1990e.

Soviet leadership.¹⁰² These actions were followed up by telegrams to the leaders of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR which requested that “in accordance with the decision of the Second Congress...we ask that the Supreme Soviet accept our representatives as delegates to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.”¹⁰³

RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

After the infamous October 1990 standoff between Moldovan ‘volunteers’ and the Gagauz (described in Chapter One), the Gagauz gained their de facto independence and were outside of Chişinău’s control. Each side had expected the other to back down. When neither did, Gorbachev as president of the Soviet Union attempted to resolve the dispute. In principle, Gorbachev sided with the Moldovans. He urged the integrity of the Moldovan republic be maintained and that the “separatists” be restrained.¹⁰⁴ Other Soviet leaders such as the Soviet Prime Minister Ryzhkov insisted that the new political structures in the Gagauz Republic and in Transnistria be disbanded.¹⁰⁵

During the first week of November 1990, Gorbachev and Ryzhkov met with President Snegur and the Gagauz and Transnistrian leaders.¹⁰⁶ Stepan Topal and Konstantin Taushanshi (a leader from Gagauz Halkı) represented the Gagauz. They were told that attempts to dismember the Union and the republic would not be supported. The Gagauz learned that the Soviet leadership had no interest in supporting separatist movements, no matter how justified the offended minority found their cause.¹⁰⁷ Instead, Gorbachev asked

¹⁰² TASS, "Gagauz 'Republic' Congress Held."

¹⁰³ Comrat Museum, *Telegramma: Predsedateliu Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR (Lukianovu, A.I.)*, signed by S.M. Topal, Comrat, 21 September 1990.

¹⁰⁴ FBIS, "Crisis Situation in Gagauz Republic Continues," *Vremya, Moscow Television Service*, (2 November 1990), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-214, 5 November 1990e. The Transnistrian Republic had been declared by this time so both Transnistrians and Gagauz were considered separatists.

¹⁰⁵ FBIS, "Ryzhkov Interviewed on Moldavia," *Moscow Television Service*, (3 November 1990), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-214, 5 November 1990s.

¹⁰⁶ Pravda, "Vstrecha Prezidenta SSSR M.S. Gorbacheva s Predstaviteliami SSR Moldova," 5 November 1990c.

¹⁰⁷ Topal, Personal Interview with Author.

Moldova's leaders to fix the problem by finding a path to reconciliation without changing current borders or creating new structures.

After the meeting with Gorbachev, a parliamentary "Reconciliation Commission" was formed by the Moldavian SSR and led by Communist Party leader Petr Lucinschi. This group met with a complimentary Gagauz commission led by Kendigelian.¹⁰⁸ After a week's worth of negotiations, Lucinschi's Reconciliation Commission gave the MSSR parliament a package of measures to resolve the standoff. This package included proportional representation of national minorities in government, new regional economic bodies and an expanded government department on nationality issues to be headed by representatives of Moldova's national minorities. Most importantly for the Gagauz, the Reconciliation Commission recommended to the parliament that it grant territorial autonomy in the form of a Gagauz administrative-territorial entity.¹⁰⁹

The parliamentary leadership, led by the Popular Front, refused to accept the commission's proposal to offer a form of autonomy to the Gagauz.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, the parliament continued to exclude the Gagauz from the legislative process. It had stripped ten Gagauz deputies of their mandates in October and refused to even consider the matter again

¹⁰⁸ FBIS, "Russian Envoy Hopes Moldova Compromise Viable," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, (13 November 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-221, 15 November 1990r; ITAR-TASS, "Crisis Situation in Dnestr Republic Continues," (6 November 1990), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-216, 7 November 1990a.

¹⁰⁹ ITAR-TASS, "No Consensus on Moldovan Resolution," (13 November 1990), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-220, 14 November 1990c.

¹¹⁰ Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Postanovlenie Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova: O Neotlozhnykh Merakh Po Dostizheniu Grazhdanskogo Soglasii V SSR Moldova," 13 December 1990h. Parliament called for the creation of a republic-level government department for national minority issues and stated that government agencies should have representation of citizens of all nationalities residing in Moldova.

until the end of December.¹¹¹ By then, the Gagauz held their first formal session of the Supreme Soviet of the Gagauz Republic.¹¹²

Without any offer from Moldova, the Gagauz moved forward with building the popular assembly, presidency, and provisional government. The Gagauz slowly continued to build up a de facto Republic while waiting for Moldova's leadership to compromise on the issue of autonomy.

3.3 Conclusion

The significant outcome in the period of 1988-1990 happened on 19 August 1990 with the Gagauz declaration to create an independent republic. I argue that the Gagauz declaration was predictable given the actions of Moldova's parliament, specifically the events of 26 and 27 July 1990. On those dates, parliament unequivocally rejected the Gagauz requests for autonomy, both by endorsing the Joint Commission report and by voting against a Gagauz-sponsored autonomy measure on the parliament floor.

As a result of the "exclusion" of Gagauz interests, combined with the finality of parliament's rejection of autonomy, the Gagauz lost confidence in Moldova's parliament. Without any hope for a compromise agreement, the Gagauz moved forward with a declaration of independence.¹¹³ The Gagauz actions were not unexpected. A comparative study of minority groups noted: "The exclusion of a minority group from critical decision-making processes at the political centre can gravely heighten that community's sense of exposure and vulnerability The exclusion of significant group interests, in brief, undermines confidence about the intentions of a dominant state elite toward political

¹¹¹ FBIS, "Moldovan Deputies Discuss Internal Ministry," *Moscow Domestic Service*, (28 December 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-251, 31 December 1990p; TASS, "Coverage of Crisis Situation in Gagauz Region."

¹¹² FBIS, "Gagauz Supreme Soviet Declares Sovereignty," *Selskaya Zhizn'*, (13 December 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-242, 17 December 1990j; ITAR-TASS, "Moldovan Interior Minister on Troop Withdrawal."

¹¹³ The direct effect of parliament's actions is supported by interviews held in 1990 and in 2004, 2005. See also an interview conducted with one of the Gagauz leaders two weeks after the declaration in FBIS, "The Gagauz Seek a Compromise."

minorities in their midst.”¹¹⁴ Without confidence that the system would respond to their needs, the Gagauz opted to separate.

This institutional explanation marks a key departure from most scholarship on the issue. The majority of scholars describe the actions of the Gagauz declaration on 19 August 1990 as “reactive nationalism” against a Moldovan awakening and rebirth.¹¹⁵ The Gagauz proclamation of an independent republic was “in reaction to the Moldovan declaration of sovereignty.”¹¹⁶ This sentiment is shared by others who attribute the Gagauz action as inevitable given pan-Romanian orientation of Moldova’s parliament.¹¹⁷ In a sense it is a fatalistic approach that once Moldova’s national rebirth had been put into motion, the actions of the Gagauz were an inescapable result.

This “reactive nationalism” argument is overstated for several reasons. The first is that it ignores specific key events proceeding the 19 August 1990 Gagauz declaration. The Gagauz held an Extraordinary Congress on 22 July—four days before the Joint Commission was scheduled to publish their report. Had the Gagauz felt that separation was a forgone conclusion, it is difficult to explain why Gagauz leaders held the Congress. At the Congress, the Gagauz reasserted their desire to stay *within* Moldova as an autonomous republic.¹¹⁸ At the time, Moldova’s Popular Front had already exerted their influence in Parliament by

¹¹⁴ Rothchild and Hartzell, "Security in Deeply Divided Societies: The Role of Territorial Autonomy," 257.

¹¹⁵ Chinn and Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States*, 168; Chinn and Roper, "Ethnic Mobilization and Reactive Nationalism: The Case of Moldova," 291; Kymlicka, "Nation-Building and Minority Rights: Comparing West and East," 200; Neukirch, "Autonomy and Conflict Transformation: The Gagauz Territorial Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova," 109; Roper, "Regionalism in Moldova: The Case of Transnistria and Gagauzia," 105; Skvortsova, "The Cultural and Social Makeup of Moldova: A Bipolar or Dispersed Society," 181; Thompson, "The Gagauz in Moldova and Their Road to Autonomy," 133.

¹¹⁶ Neukirch, "Autonomy and Conflict Transformation: The Gagauz Territorial Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova," 109.

¹¹⁷ Charles King, "Gagauz Yeri and the Dilemmas of Self-Determination," *Transition* 1, no. 19 (1995), 22; Pål Kolstø and Andrei Malgrin, "The Transnistrian Republic: A Case of Politicized Regionalism," *Nationalities Papers* 26, no. 1 (1998), 107-08; Roper, "Regionalism in Moldova: The Case of Transnistria and Gagauzia," 117.

¹¹⁸ Crowther does not discuss the July Gagauz Congress but appreciates the affect of the institutional failure to accommodate Gagauz demands in the formation of the Gagauz republic. See Crowther, "Ethnic Politics and the Post-Communist Transition in Moldova," 149.

adopting the tricolour Romanian flag, and passing Moldova's declaration of sovereignty. Nonetheless, the Gagauz were willing to accept the parliament's nationalist legislation and pan-Romanian orientation if an autonomous political structure was created on their behalf. The "reactionary nationalist" argument fails to account for the fact that the Gagauz were willing to remain part of Moldova less than a month before the 19 August 1990 declaration.

Second, the actions of the Gagauz were predictable and not reactionary. Gagauz demands for territorial autonomy were declared publicly from December 1988 onwards and remained clear and consistent.¹¹⁹ The process by which they pursued autonomy had been transparent, well publicized, and personally observed by members of Moldova's political elite. Gagauz held mass assemblies and congresses on 21 February 1989, 21 May 1989, 12 November 1989, and 22 July 1990 where they discussed autonomy within Moldova before their declaration of independence on 19 August 1990. The "reactive" argument dismisses the fact that Gagauz goals for an autonomous region had been well established prior to Moldova's national rebirth and the 1990 election. Gagauz demands were not a recent reaction but the expression of grievances which had been held even before perestroika and glasnost.

The final reason to reconsider the "reactive nationalism" argument is its lack of appreciation for the political activity which preceded the separation. Since August 1989, the Gagauz had participated extensively in the work of the Puşcaş Commission which culminated with the Joint Commission's report on 27 July 1990. The Gagauz did not lose confidence in the political process until the nationalist Popular Front leaders used their control over the legislative agenda to produce the conflictual policy.¹²⁰ Snegur himself recognized that the

¹¹⁹ This is described in more detail in Chapter One and summarized in Table 1.2.

¹²⁰ To understand the relationship between agenda control and conflictual policy outcomes, see Cox and McCubbins, "The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes," 63; Döring, ed., *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, 45.

Moldovans had pushed away the Gagauz. He later reflected that the Joint Commission was not a group of politicians, capable of compromise, but instead a group of “patriots.”¹²¹

I argue that the manner in the majority used its agenda control helps to explain the political outcomes from 1988 to 1990. An in-case comparison of the Soviet and Moldovan regimes shows two different approaches to accommodation. Under the Soviet regime, Gorbachev’s reforms loosened agenda control which engaged minorities like the Gagauz. The creation of the Congress of People’s Deputies opened up access points and allowed Gagauz demands for autonomy onto the USSR Supreme Soviet agenda.¹²² From there, favourable treatment of the Gagauz issue resulted in the creation of the Puşcaş Commission. The Puşcaş Commission gave the Gagauz equal representation, allowed a minority report, and methodically deliberated over its final recommendation.

The approach of the Puşcaş Commission was markedly different from the Joint Commission. A comparison of these two commissions is summarized in Table 3.2. The Joint Commission was dominated by Moldovan deputies, the final report lacked a minority viewpoint, and the speed by which the parliament considered the Gagauz issue precluded any thoughtful deliberation. In the end, parliament accepted the Joint Commission’s findings and the Popular Front leadership refused to offer the Gagauz any form of territorial autonomy. This directly influenced the change of Gagauz confidence in the parliamentary process.

Table 3.2 Effects of Commission Procedures on the Gagauz

<i>Rules and Procedures</i>	<i>Puşcaş Commission</i>	<i>Joint Commission</i>
Minority Allocation	+	-
Deliberation Speed	+	-
Minority Report	+	-
Total Effect	+	-

¹²¹ Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

¹²² Other groups who gained access to the agenda were the Soviet Germans, the Crimean Tatars, and the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh.

This leads to a central finding of this chapter: the exclusionary use of parliamentary power by Moldova's majority hurt its ability to accommodate the demands of the Gagauz. As predicted, when majorities control the legislative agenda at the expense of minority rights, minority nationalities will seek alternative means to defend themselves and secure their demands. As Döring (1995) warns, "If minority interests, for which feelings run high, are consistently overruled by the majority, the principle of majority rule assuming each vote to be equal is liable to break down."¹²³ Upon reflection of the events, Snegur agreed with this assessment. He noted with regret that in late July 1990 the "appropriate conditions" were not ready in parliament for a solution to be worked out with the Gagauz.¹²⁴ It was the Popular Front leadership's exclusion of Gagauz interests which prevented the "appropriate conditions" for a settlement or compromise. The Gagauz felt 'consistently overruled' by the Moldovan majority and declared their own republic.

In the next chapter, I consider how Moldova's evolving institutional features affected the ability of the fledgling state to accommodate the demands of its multi-national population. The period of 1991 to 1993 was characterized by unforeseen dramatic events as the Soviet Union broke apart and the independent Republic of Moldova emerged. I focus on an irresolvable stalemate on the Gagauz issue due to divisions within the 1990 parliament and a growing power struggle within the executive branch.

¹²³ Döring, ed., *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, 30.

¹²⁴ Snegur claimed to have been caught off guard by the Gagauz declaration, while Pușcaș and Arseni assert they were not surprised. Snegur related that after the parliamentary session ended (with the decree to reject Gagauz autonomy), he left for a holiday in the Trans-Carpathian region. After being notified of the Gagauz action by Pușcaș, he cancelled his vacation, returned to Moldova, and called an extraordinary session of Moldova's parliament. Information from Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

CHAPTER 4: AGENDA CONTROL AND STALEMATE: 1991-1993

4.1 Introduction

During the period 1991 to 1993, Moldova saw the coming to power of more moderate leaders who emphasized pragmatism over idealism. The balance of power in Moldova shifted from the conservative Popular Front to the moderate Agrarian party. The top three political offices, the president, prime minister, and parliamentary chairman, were eventually occupied by Agrarian leaning politicians. These actors appreciated the political necessity of compromise in a divided society. On the issue of Gagauz autonomy, all three had publicly expressed their support for Moldova to adopt a statute which established territorial autonomy. The Agrarian party, the largest group of deputies in the parliament, also pledged to grant autonomy to the Gagauz. This made a stalemate on the issue of autonomy for the Gagauz unexpected. But to the frustration of Moldova's most powerful leaders and especially to the Gagauz, Moldova's parliament was deadlocked and unable to reach a settlement.

In the previous chapter, I provide an institutional explanation for why the Gagauz separated from Moldova in 1990. This chapter uses a similar framework to examine the stalemate between the Gagauz and Moldova from 1991 to 1993. It describes how the parliament repeatedly blocked negotiated compromises to resolve the issue. To explain why this happened, I evaluate the key political actors of the period: the parliament, the prime minister, and the president and their associated institutional powers. I then look at those features of parliamentary governance that were crucial to controlling the legislative agenda. The remainder of the chapter assesses how Moldova's institutional arrangement negatively affected the ability of political actors to pass a form of autonomy for the Gagauz.

I argue that the stalemate over Gagauz autonomy was caused by institutional features which weakened party leaders. The Agrarian party was ineffective because it had little power over the parliamentary leadership and limited influence over its own deputies. Concurrently,

the opposition party was able to block legislation and scuttle agreements. Without control of the legislative agenda, party leaders could not pass the negotiated compromise. This chapter provides insight into what caused the stalemate and what changes were necessary in order for Moldova to move forward and adopt autonomy for the Gagauz.

4.2 Stalemate in Moldova: A Deadlocked Parliament

In 1990, the Gagauz created a popular assembly and provisional government in their self-proclaimed Gagauz Republic. Gorbachev persisted in his attempt to negotiate a compromise and issued a decree on 22 December 1990 to normalize the situation in the MSSR.¹ President Snegur gave his support to Gorbachev's efforts when he addressed Moldova's legislature on 2 January 1991.² In response to Gorbachev's decree, Moldova's parliamentary leadership offered a complete reorganization of the local self-government in Moldova. The Moldovan proposal was to give the Gagauz a special county in a decentralized unitary state. It allowed for the election of government leaders, who would be confirmed by the Moldovan parliament.³ However, this offer of decentralization did not match the level of self-rule associated with an autonomous region. The new local administration would not be able to make decisions on political questions or pass legislation. Without that level of autonomy, the Gagauz rejected the parliament's proposal. The Gagauz continued to seek recognition for their new republic in the Soviet Union.

Extreme differences of opinion existed between the Gagauz and Moldovans on what should happen to the Soviet empire. This was demonstrated in the March 1991 referendum on the viability of the Soviet Union. Moldova, like the Baltic republics, Georgia and

¹ On 24 December the Gagauz were reportedly "anxious about whether the Moldovan legislature [would] return to an examination of the expression of the will of this Turkic people on the formation of an autonomous entity." See FBIS, "Moldovan Reaction to Gorbachev Decree Varies," *ITAR-TASS*, (24 December 1990), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-248, 26 December 1990q.

² *ITAR-TASS*, "Gorbachev's Decree Finds Mixed Moldovan Reaction," (2 January 1991), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-002, 3 January 1991b.

³ Cassandra Cavanaugh, "Conflict in Moldova: The Gagauz Factor," *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, no. 32 (1992), 14.

Armenia, opted not to participate in the Union-wide referendum on the future of the country. This decision, passed by the parliament on 19 February, was endorsed by all the senior leadership in Moldova.⁴ Moldova, eager to gain additional sovereignty and independence, wanted to see the demise of the Soviet Union. The Gagauz on the other hand, sought territorial autonomy in the Soviet Union and wanted to see its continuance. The Gagauz (and Transnistrian) regions decided to participate in the referendum. The Gagauz reported a 96% turnout for the vote, with 99% voting in favour of a renovated Soviet Union.⁵

Though the Gagauz heartily endorsed the Soviet Union, they did not receive much assistance from Soviet leaders. Topal publicly criticized Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders for their lack of support, especially after the Gagauz voted so forcefully in favour of the future of the Soviet Union.⁶ Since the August 1990 declaration of the Gagauz Republic, the Gagauz had attempted to participate in all-Union forums of every kind but had not been recognized by any Union-wide body. At the Fourth USSR Congress of People's Deputies held in December 1990, Gorbachev acknowledged the demands made by Gagauz representatives but refused to recognize the new self-declared republic. Instead, Gorbachev argued that a solution must preserve the territorial integrity of Moldova as a sovereign republic.⁷

The exclusion of the Gagauz from Union-level discussions was a deliberate decision by Gorbachev in a desperate effort to save the Union. Even entities previously recognized as autonomous regions were used as bargaining chips by Gorbachev. For example, Gorbachev invited representatives of 17 of the 20 autonomous republics to initial the March 1991 version

⁴ TASS, "10,000 in Kishinev Protest Union Referendum," (9 March 1991), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-047, 11 March 1991a. At this time, the senior leadership included the President Snegur, Prime Minister Druc, and Parliamentary Chairman Moshanu.

⁵ FBIS, "Gagauz Voters Support Union Referendum," *First Program Radio Network*, (18 March 1991), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-054-S, 20 March 1991e.

⁶ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, "My Nakhodimsia Mezhdubom I Zemlei."

⁷ FBIS, "Gorbachev Addresses 19 Dec Congress Session," *Moscow Television Service*, (19 December 1990), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-245, 20 December 1990l.

of the new Union treaty in an attempt to undermine the authority of republic leaders like Yeltsin who sought for more power at the expense of the centre. After Gorbachev met with Yeltsin and the leaders of the other nine republics to work out a compromise agreement, the autonomous republics were excluded from the process.⁸ The Gagauz were even more of an outsider than the autonomous republics and had no allies within the Soviet system or in the republic-level leadership.⁹ Topal considered Yeltsin's push for more republic-level autonomy as harmful to the Gagauz and similar small peoples.¹⁰

This was the state of affairs during the tumultuous summer of 1991 before the Soviet Union broke apart. The de facto Gagauz Republic existed but without any support from within or without Moldova. Gagauz leaders had hoped that Union-level leaders would recognize the Gagauz republic within the renovated Soviet Union.¹¹ Given the trouble Gorbachev faced in holding on to the republics, it was unlikely that the Soviet Union would recognize newly created republics.

The Gagauz eventually realized that the best chance for autonomy was a change from within Moldova.¹² Gagauz leader Stepan Topal understood that if the Gagauz broke with Moldova, the Gagauz would ultimately "tighten the noose around our own necks."¹³ From Topal's view, the problem was that the Moldovan parliament was "allergic to the word autonomy."¹⁴ The Gagauz needed political actors in Moldova who would overcome their 'allergy' and champion the Gagauz cause. Moldova's critical actors are described next.

⁸ White, Gill, and Slider, *The Politics of Transition: Shaping a Post-Soviet Future*, 90.

⁹ The Gagauz were not alone. In other republics which refused to participate in the new Union treaty, similar groups tried in vain to join the negotiations on the new USSR. These groups included the Abkhaz autonomous republic and the South Ossetia autonomous oblast in Georgia, the Estonian Interregional Council and Lithuania's Shalchiniskskiy Raion. See FBIS, "Draft Treaty on the Union of Sovereign States Backed," *Izvestiya*, (13 July 1991), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-138, 18 July 1991b.

¹⁰ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, "My Nakhodimsia Mezhdubom I Zemlei."

¹¹ FBIS, "Gagauz Independence Motivations Examined," *Izvestiya*, (6 May 1991), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-091, 10 May 1991c.

¹² *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, "My Nakhodimsia Mezhdubom I Zemlei."

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

4.2.1 Political Actors and Agenda Setters

Moldova's influential political actors and agenda setters during the period of 1991 to 1993 were parliament's political parties and leadership, the prime minister, and the president. These actors played a significant role in addressing the Gagauz question and eventually developed a common view that Moldova should adopt autonomy for the Gagauz. The reasons for this convergence will be explored further in this chapter.

PARLIAMENT

By 1992, the parliament looked and acted substantively different than the same body which had been elected two years earlier. In Chapter Three, I described the parliamentary election of 1990 which brought to power the Popular Front of Moldova. Initially, the leadership and approximately 65% of the deputies were Popular Front supporters or sympathetic to their agenda. Less than two years later the Popular Front no longer enjoyed the support of a sizable majority of deputies but instead had declared themselves the "opposition" within parliament.¹⁵ The radicalization of the Popular Front, combined with their government's mishandling of Moldova's economic and political crises, dampened their support. Deputies became more moderate and looked to experienced leaders who almost without exception were from the old Communist Party hierarchy.

Another difference in the parliament was the significant number of deputies who no longer held parliamentary mandates or simply did not attend sessions. After the separation of the Gagauz and Transnistrian regions some deputies handed in their parliamentary 'mandates,' while others were stripped of their mandates by parliament. Article 98 of the constitution gave the parliament the right to recognize the credentials of a deputy and also the power to reject those same credentials. The stripping of mandates happened for a wide

¹⁵ Nezavisimaya Moldova, "Deklaratsiia Narodnogo Fronta Moldovy O Prezidentskikh Vyborakh V Respublike Moldova."

variety of reasons, including “unconstitutional activity,” “loss of contact with electors,” and “unjustified absenteeism.”¹⁶ The vast majority of deputies who left or were forced out of parliament were non-Moldovans (Russian or Ukrainian) from Transnistria and a handful from Gagauz regions. As a result the parliament became less ethnically diverse.

For the Gagauz, the transformed parliament had advantages and disadvantages. One advantage was the lessened influence of the Popular Front, which improved the chances of negotiating a compromise. In 1990, it had been the Popular Front’s exclusionary use of agenda control which had spurred the Gagauz separation. One disadvantage of the parliament in 1992 was the higher percentage of ethnic Moldovans. This had a negative impact on obtaining territorial autonomy as ethnic Moldovans were less sympathetic to Gagauz self-determination demands than Russian-speakers. From the Gagauz perspective, these two changes in parliament nearly balanced each other out. The parliament became more moderate and less nationalistic while ethnically it became less diverse and more Moldovan.

A final difference between the parliaments was legitimacy. After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the parliament was now the sole law-making authority in Moldova. Instead of struggling with Soviet leaders and government for control, the Moldovan parliament and the government it supported was now fully responsible for producing solutions. The pressure to perform was evident by the frequent rotation of government leadership. Parliament installed four different prime ministers from 1990-1992 in an effort to find a leader who could fix the severe problems facing the young republic. The creation of the internationally-recognized Republic of Moldova also precluded the possibility of the Gagauz going outside of the republic to gain autonomy within the larger Soviet expanse. For the Gagauz, the parliament

¹⁶ See BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, “Moldovan Parliament Sacks 10 Deputies,” *Radio One*, (accessed via LexisNexis), transcribed and published by BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 22 December 1992; TASS, “Dniester Representatives in Moldovan Parliament Resign,” (accessed via LexisNexis), 25 June 1992.

was now the sole government entity which could approve legislation creating territorial autonomy within the new centralized state of Moldova.

Parties

During the period 1991 to 1993, the formerly dominant Popular Front became more nationalistic as Moldova's independence became a reality. For some of the Popular Front leaders, the end goal of their movement was not an independent Moldova but reunification with Romania. This goal of reunification splintered the party into three groups: (1) national radicals who wanted immediate unification; (2) moderate nationalists who proposed gradual unification or alignment with Romania; and (3) Moldovan nationalists who supported the independent republic of Moldova. These groups took the form of at least four different political parties.¹⁷ As a result, many deputies who had been sympathetic to the Popular Front no longer supported the fractured movement and allied themselves with more moderate groups. Consequently, in October 1991 the largest Popular Front group formally declared themselves in opposition to President Snegur and to the new "procommunist" majority in parliament.¹⁸

While the Popular Front began to dismantle, the Agrarians grew stronger and became better organized. When the parliament convened in May 1991, the Agrarian party of deputies had become the single largest coherent bloc with 108 deputies.¹⁹ This group of deputies officially formed the Agrarian Democratic Party of Moldova in October 1991, which included reform-minded communists, agricultural managers, and collective farmers.²⁰ Also in 1991, the Agrarians wielded their political power by working with President Snegur to

¹⁷ These groups included the Popular Front, the Congress of Intellectuals, the Democratic Party, and the Democratic Labour Party.

¹⁸ *Nezavisimaya Moldova*, "Deklaratsiia Narodnogo Fronta Moldovy O Prezidentskikh Vyborakh V Respublike Moldova."

¹⁹ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, "Agrarian Deputies Active before Next Session of Parliament," *Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union*, (accessed via LexisNexis), translated by BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 6 May 1991a.

²⁰ Janusz Bugajski, *Political Parties of Eastern Europe: A Guide to Politics in the Post-Communist Era* (Armonk, N.Y. ; London: Sharpe, 2002), 906.

remove the controversial Mircea Druc from the office of prime minister. In 1992, they installed their favoured candidate, Andrei Sangheli, as prime minister. The Agrarians were joined by the Socialist Edinstvo Bloc, a remnant of the *Edinstvo* movement and new Socialist party, which was a collection of pro-Soviet, mostly Russian deputies and staunch communists. Together, this coalition could align itself with a group of independent deputies and forge a majority in the parliament, depending on the issue.

The power struggle in the parliament was between four basic groups: the Popular Front and their allies; the Agrarians and their allies; the independent deputies (mainly Russian and Communist), and the absentee deputies. Figure 4.1 illustrates the shift in membership of these four groups from 1990 to 1993.²¹

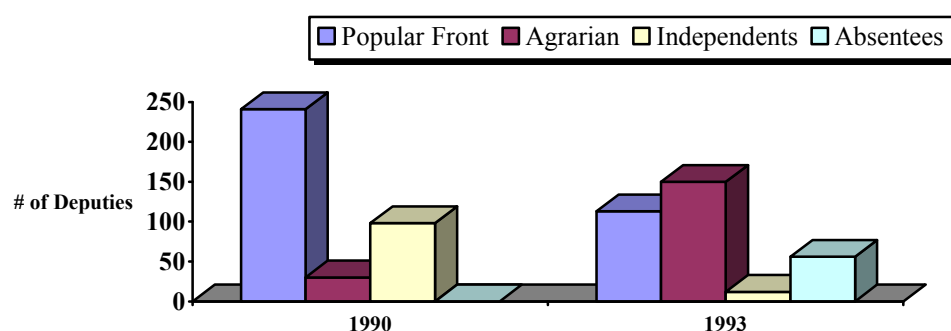


Figure 4.1 Shift in Parliamentary Party Strength (1990 to 1993)

Most battles in parliament were fought between the Popular Front and its splinter groups on one side and the Agrarians and its allies on the other. The Gagauz issue added an ethnic quality to the debate as it involved the issue of autonomy for a non-Moldovan people on the territory of Moldova.²² A legislative survey conducted in May 1993 measured deputy attitudes towards minorities in Moldova and found that Popular Front deputies were far more

²¹ The parliament started with 370 seats in 1990. By 1993, approximately forty deputies had lost their mandate.

²² The issue of 'homeland making' is not examined here. Homelands by their nature are "exclusionary" which made the issue of territorial autonomy even more emotional. See Robert J. Kaiser, "Homeland Making and the Territorialization of National Identity," in *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World: Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism*, ed. Daniele Conversi (London; New York: Routledge, 2004).

hostile to minorities than Agrarian deputies.²³ In contrast, the Socialist party held very favourable views of minorities. The attitudes of Agrarian deputies toward ethnic minorities ranged between the exclusionary Popular Front legislators on the right and the accommodating Socialist party faction on the left.²⁴ The leadership also represented this wide spectrum of views.

Parliamentary Chairman

As discussed in Chapter Three, the parliamentary chairman and the presidium held extensive control of the agenda. Using the provisions found in Chapter 11 of the constitution, the chairman and the presidium set the parliamentary agenda, issued decrees and resolutions when parliament was not in session, and could control legislative debate by choosing who to recognize.²⁵

Moldova's parliamentary leadership remained unchanged from the election of 1990 through to the beginning of 1993. Even though the Popular Front had declared itself the opposition, Alexandru Mosanu, the Popular Front leader, continued to serve as the parliamentary chairman. Mosanu remained in power with his first deputy Ion Hadarca, another Popular Front leader, until he resigned in January 1993. Mosanu, Hadarca, and other members of the presidium represented a group of Moldova's most ardent nationalists.

The Popular Front's control of the parliamentary chairman made a parliamentary solution of the Gagauz issue even more difficult. A compromise agreement needed to pass through the chairman and the presidium in order to make it on the parliament's agenda. Until the chairman and the presidium changed, there was little support to draft legislation on

²³ Crowther, "The Politics of Democratization in Postcommunist Moldova," 313-17. The scale on "hostility toward minorities" was constructed by calculating the mean response on four questions which dealt with minority relations. These questions did not distinguish between Gagauz and other minorities.

²⁴ Ibid, 313-17.

²⁵ Feldbrugge, *The Constitutions of the USSR and the Union Republics: Analysis, Texts, Reports*, 309-11.

Gagauz autonomy. The best chance for a compromise agreement would be through efforts of the prime minister and the government.

PRIME MINISTER

Moldova's prime minister faced the daunting challenge of leading the transformation from a Soviet republic to an independent state. In May 1990, less than one month after the opening session of Moldova's newly elected parliament, the then chairman of the Council of Ministers (prime minister), Petru Pascariu, resigned in the wake of attacks on Russian-speaking deputies, citing "a negative attitude" towards his government.²⁶ Two days later the Popular Front controlled parliament voted to replace Pascariu with the economist Mircea Druc, who was not a member of the Communist Party but instead came up from within the ranks of the Popular Front leadership. An ardent pan-Romanian nationalist, it was Druc who had organized the volunteer force of nationalists which had attempted to stop Gagauz elections. He also strongly favoured the immediate removal of Moldova from the USSR in order to begin the reunification process with Romania.

After just under a year in office, Druc lost a vote of no confidence on 22 May 1991.²⁷ Druc's reforms failed to improve the economic situation in Moldova and his controversial agriculture policy caused considerable dissatisfaction within the Agrarian bloc.²⁸ Druc was replaced by Valeriu Muravschi, a less nationalist politician with a background in finance. Parliament gave Muravschi the charge to improve economic conditions in the republic.²⁹ A

²⁶ Tolz, "The USSR This Week," 37. Pascariu, a political veteran, was appointed on 10 January 1990. See Crowther, "Moldova: Caught between Nation and Empire," 341.

²⁷ In a secret ballot, 207 of the 218 legislators present voted against Druc while 100 legislators boycotted the vote. See Associated Press, "Prime Minister of Moldavia Loses No-Confidence Vote," (accessed via LexisNexis), 22 May 1991.

²⁸ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, "Agrarian Deputies Active before Next Session of Parliament." Snegur stated that Druc was "dismissed" because of his poor performance in regards to Moldova's economy (GDP declined by 18 percent in 1991). See Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

²⁹ Muravschi, then serving as a deputy Prime Minister, was appointed by Snegur and voted in by 185 to 53. See TASS, "New Moldavian Prime Minister Appointed," (accessed via LexisNexis), 28 May 1991b. Muravschi was a "non-party economist." See Vladimir Socor, "Moldavia Builds a New State," *Radio Liberty Report on the USSR and Successor States* 1, no. 1 (1992), 42.

year later, Moldova's prime minister was replaced again when Muravschi and his ministers voluntarily stepped down due to their failure to resolve the economic and political crises facing the young republic.³⁰ This time, Snegur appointed a moderate politician by the name of Andrei Sangheli, who had served in Muravschi's cabinet as the Minister of Agriculture. In a period of two and half years, Moldova had appointed four different prime ministers.

Table 4.1 shows the transition of prime ministers from 1990-1992 and their general attitude toward Gagauz autonomy (positive sign for favourable or negative sign for unfavourable). Sangheli's appointment was good news for the Gagauz. As prime minister, he supported autonomy and promised to actively find a political settlement to solve the issue.³¹

Table 4.1 Moldova's Prime Ministers (1990-1992)

<i>Prime Minister</i>	<i>Date Appointed</i>	<i>Party or Affiliation</i>	<i>Attitude toward Gagauz autonomy</i>
Petru Pascariu	January 1990	Communist	-
Mircea Druc	May 1990	Popular Front	-
Valeriu Muravschi	May 1991	None	-
Andrei Sangheli	July 1992	Agrarian	+

Snegur nominated Sangheli due to his strong support among Agrarian deputies and also because of his experience in government service during Communist rule.³² In contrast to the high turnover of previous prime ministers, Sangheli's tenure brought needed stability to the office as he served for the next four-and-a-half years. The government itself was still a

³⁰ Sangheli, Muravschi's replacement, blamed Muravschi's dismissal on a lack of ability and leadership in regards to economic affairs. See Andrei Sangheli, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 18 November 2005. In 1992, Moldova's GDP declined by 21 percent. See The World Bank, *Moldova: Moving to a Market Economy*, In *World Bank Country Studies*, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, March 1994.

³¹ RFE/RL Weekly Review, "New Prime Minister Approved," *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, no. 29 (1992d). Sangheli was voted into office by a vote of 185 to 59.

³² King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 135. In the MSSR, Sangheli served in the Council of Ministers and on the Moldavian Communist Party Central Committee Bureau. See Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Slovo Partii -- V Massy."

mixture of pro-Romanian forces and pro-Moldovan forces making it difficult for Sangheli to manage.³³ He began by firing many of the key cabinet ministers from the old government, ostensibly to make the process of reconciliation easier with Gagauz and Transnistrian leaders.³⁴ Sangheli broke from past prime ministers in expressing his commitment to resolve the Gagauz question through serious negotiations.³⁵

When parliament was not in session, much of the preparatory work for an agreement with the Gagauz would be done by the government. In 1991, the government set up a Department of National Relations to lead this effort and improve inter-ethnic relations in Moldova.³⁶ By October 1991, this office had produced several draft laws to solve the Gagauz question and continued to address other issues affecting Moldovan minority nationalities.³⁷ Draft settlements negotiated by the Department of National Relations were submitted directly to the presidium for the parliament's consideration.³⁸ These efforts were more successful when Sangheli joined forces with President Snegur to work towards constructing an agreeable compromise with the Gagauz.

MOLDOVA'S PRESIDENT

The third key political actor from 1991 to 1993 was Moldova's president, Mircea Snegur. The president's role as an agenda setter was slightly ambiguous due to the lack of authority to initiate legislation in the outdated constitution. Additionally, the president's agenda-setting power in parliament was weakened by an absence of a pro-presidential

³³ Sangheli, Personal Interview with Author.

³⁴ RFE/RL Weekly Review, "Defense and Security Ministers Dismissed," *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, no. 31 (1992a).

³⁵ FBIS, "Moldova: New Premier-New Turn," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, (4 July 1992), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-92-135, 14 July 1992e.

³⁶ Viktor Grebeshnikov, the first provisional director of the department was appointed by Prime Minister Druc on 1 February 1991. On 21 May 1991 the department became a permanent government office. See Victor Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 25 November 2005.

³⁷ FBIS, "Government's Spokesman for Interethnic Problems Reviews Issues," *Kishinevskiye Novosti*, (14 August 1993), translated in FBIS JPRS Report, FBIS-USR-93-124, 27 August 1993h; *Nezavisimaya Moldova*, "Zemli Budzhaka Issusheny Ozhidaniem," 10 October 1991c.

³⁸ Article 100 of the original 1978 Moldavian SSR constitution gave authority for legislative initiative to the Council of Ministers.

political organization or party to support his initiatives.³⁹ His power stemmed mainly from his ability to dissolve parliament and issue decrees.⁴⁰ The economic problems in Moldova allowed President Snegur to use these presidential powers to issue decrees on economic reforms such as creating a financial banking system and introducing the national currency.⁴¹ The presidential decrees were then debated and transformed into law by parliament.

The presidency had been established on 2 September 1990 with a decree by the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR, signed by Snegur who was then chairman of the MSSR Supreme Soviet.⁴² The next day Snegur was elected as Moldova's president in an open, uncontested ballot by the parliament.⁴³ In 1991, new provisions were introduced which called for the president to be a popularly elected office.⁴⁴ On 8 December 1991, Snegur ran unopposed due in part to his popularity and in part to restrictions in the legislation which prevented his rivals from running.⁴⁵ In the end, Snegur gained 98% of the vote; however, only 67% of the total electorate voted as the Gagauz and Transnistrian regions did not participate in the election.⁴⁶

³⁹ See Eugene Mazo, "Comparative Constitutional Engineering and Comparative Constitutional Governance in the Republic of Moldova" (paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 1-4 September 2005); Lucan A. Way, "Pluralism by Default in Moldova," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 4 (2002), 136.

⁴⁰ The power to dissolve parliament was debated. Snegur felt he had it while some parliamentary leaders did not.

⁴¹ Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

⁴² Sovetskaya Moldaviya, "Postanovlenie Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR Moldova O Nekotorykh Merakh Po Stabilizatsii Obshchestvenno-Politicheskoi Obstanovki V SSR Moldova."

⁴³ TASS, "Snegur Elected President."

⁴⁴ FBIS, "Leader on Minsk Accord, Gagauz Relations," *Chişinău Radio Network*, (10 December 1991), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-238, 11 December 1991f. Moldova followed other republics in holding direct elections for its head of state. Like the leaders in four other republics (Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan), Snegur ran unopposed as the acting or current president or head of parliament. See White, Gill, and Slider, *The Politics of Transition: Shaping a Post-Soviet Future*, 101-02.

⁴⁵ Only citizens who had lived in the republic for the last 10 years could be elected to the post. This kept rivals like the ex-Prime Minister Mircea Druc and Snegur's old rival Petr Lucinschi out of the running. See FBIS, "Will the President Be Elected President?," *Izvestiya*, (29 November 1991), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-240, 13 December 1991k.

⁴⁶ FBIS, "Presidential Election Final Results Reported," *Chişinău Radio Network*, (10 December 1991), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-238, 11 December 1991h.

Even with the newfound legitimacy of a popularly elected President, Snegur was modest in using his power and generally took a “passive stance” on pursuing his legislative agenda.⁴⁷ As Snegur lacked power to dismiss government ministers unilaterally, Moldova was essentially a premier-presidential regime where the popularly-elected president was politically on par with the prime minister.⁴⁸ Unlike the violent relationship which developed between Yeltsin and the Russian parliament, a conflict between Snegur and the Moldovan parliament never materialized.⁴⁹ One reason was Snegur’s cautious development of his role vis-à-vis the parliament.⁵⁰

Snegur’s restrained use of power was manifest as he dealt with the Gagauz question. After his 1990 nationalistic speech before the parliament, Snegur tempered his attitude toward Gagauz autonomy.⁵¹ Being a self-described master of compromise, Snegur concluded that he had overreacted and Moldova needed to find a solution for the problem.⁵² However, Snegur repeatedly declined Gagauz requests to use a presidential decree to establish autonomy for the Gagauz. He argued that it would only have temporary status and would still need parliamentary ratification. In his view autonomy required organic law to create such a territorial based political structure.⁵³ He and his advisors feared that the

⁴⁷ Crowther, "The Politics of Democratization in Postcommunist Moldova," 308.

⁴⁸ Semi-Presidential government is defined in Maurice Duverger, "A New Political System Model: Semi-Presidential Government," *European Journal of Political Research* 8, no. 2 (1980). The premier-presidential regime is marked by presidents who are (1) popularly elected, (2) possess considerable powers, and (3) share power with a premier and cabinet, subject to a vote of confidence in parliament. See Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 23.

⁴⁹ Moldova was grouped with Poland, Romania, and Lithuania as post-Communist premier-presidential Systems. See Levent Gönenç and Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden. Instituut voor Oost-Europees Recht en Ruslandkunde, *Prospects for Constitutionalism in Post-Communist Countries* (The Hague ; London: Martinus Nijhoff, 2002), 308-09.

⁵⁰ I. M. Klyamkin and Lilia Fedorovna Shevtsova, *This Omnipotent and Impotent Government : The Evolution of the Political System in Post-Communist Russia* (Moskva: Gendalf, 1999), 10-13. Parliament’s confidence in Snegur was illustrated in August 1993 when they granted him temporary powers to dismiss ministers after consultation with the Prime Minister. See BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, "Moldovan Parliament Grants President Extra Powers; Fails to Ratify CIS Treaty," *Ostankino TV*, (accessed via LexisNexis), transcribed and published in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 6 August 1993b.

⁵¹ Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

autonomy would lack legitimacy if it was established by presidential decree.⁵⁴ Snegur attempted to appease the Gagauz in other ways by having the government establish Comrat University and a Gagauz National Theatre in Ceadâr-Lunga.⁵⁵

Snegur worked with the other political actors to try to push autonomy legislation through parliament. At the end of 1991, Snegur began speaking about 'national autonomy' for the Gagauz and set up a state commission to work on the Gagauz problem.⁵⁶ After his direct election as president, Snegur promised to make further proposals to the Gagauz and Transnistrians and urged parliament to settle the political situation through constructive dialogue.⁵⁷ For the next three years, the resolution of the Gagauz issue was one of Snegur's top agenda items. Due to his hesitation to use a presidential decree, Snegur needed the agenda power of Moldova's other political actors in order to turn the campaign pledge into reality.

SUMMARY

In this section I discuss the key political actors in Moldova and the institutional functions of their positions. For the parliament, prime minister, and president, the period of 1991 to 1993 was one of change and instability. The parliament experienced a shift in control from the Popular Front to the Agrarian party. Four separate prime ministers attempted to lead the country out of crises. Moldova went from parliamentary government to semi-presidentialism with an independent executive in the form of a popularly elected president.

⁵⁴ Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁵ Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁶ FBIS, "Mircea Snegur: We Can Hardly Find the Fuel to Send the Prime Minister to Moscow," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, (13 November 1991), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-220, 14 November 1991g; Nezavisimaya Moldova, "Ukaz O Sozdanii Gosudarstvennoi Komissii Pravitel'stva Respubliki Moldova Po Problemam Iuzhnoi Zony," 10 October 1991b.

⁵⁷ INTERFAX, "President Notes Possible 'New Conflict'," (17 December 1991), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-243, 18 December 1991.

For the Gagauz, the change was welcome as many of the political forces which had rejected the creation of Gagauz autonomy were gradually replaced. President Snegur, Prime Minister Sangheli, and Agrarian party leaders supported a form of territorial autonomy. Even with the backing of these leaders, it was the parliament which remained the main obstacle to a settlement. In the next section I examine the crucial features of parliamentary governance.

4.2.2 Agenda Control and Policy Outcomes

In this section, I consider how Moldova's institutional arrangement influenced its political actors and agenda setters from 1991 to 1993. The focus is on the features which affected the control of Moldova's parliament and the ability of political actors to produce favourable policy outcomes. The remainder of the chapter examines the internal struggles within the parliament and how they contributed to stalemate on the issue of Gagauz autonomy.

MAJORITY RULE

In Chapter Three, I highlighted the impact of majority rule on minority rights when a majority controls the proceedings of a legislature. I now focus on specific legislative features which affected the majority party's ability to control parliamentary proceedings. These features became increasingly significant when the majority party, prime minister, and president agreed on the need to offer the Gagauz a form of territorial autonomy.

One procedure utilized was the quorum rule which guaranteed the majority the right to hold a legislative session.⁵⁸ In 1993 the Agrarian party used the quorum rule to adjourn

⁵⁸ The quorum rule attempts to ensure that the same decision would have been reached if the chamber were fully assembled. Quorum rules vary and if rules stipulate that a quorum is considered to be two-thirds of the elected members present, minority blocs can thwart a majority by preventing parliamentary session from being held. Two former Soviet examples of the two-thirds quorum threshold are the Parliament in Belarus and Russia's Council of Federation. For more on the effect of the quorum rule, see Rasch, "Parliamentary Voting Procedures," 497.

parliament in an attempt to force negotiations with the Popular Front.⁵⁹ Though it was the largest single party, the Agrarians only had a plurality in the parliament with around 36% of the total seats. Due to the high number of absentees, the Agrarian party could merely cause the parliament *not* to meet by ensuring a quorum was not reached. The Agrarians were unable to force parliament to be in session.

Another means by which party leaders attempted to control legislative proceedings was by choosing their own party deputies for key parliamentary positions.⁶⁰ From 1991 to 1993, Moldova's Agrarian party leaders had little influence on the process of choosing the parliamentary leadership. When the parliament first opened in 1990, leadership assignments had been voted on by the entire parliament during the first session when the Popular Front enjoyed an absolute majority of support. Even when support for the Popular Front waned and they became the opposition, the Agrarian party was not strong enough to remove deputies from their positions. By 1993, the Agrarians had only filled a few positions with their members or Agrarian-friendly deputies.⁶¹ Without the ability to secure leadership posts, the Agrarian party had limited control over the presidium and the legislative agenda.

A third means of control was to use a no-confidence vote to remove the prime minister, who was a leader in the Popular Front. Due to a worsening of the economic and social conditions in Moldova, the Agrarians were able to generate the votes needed from other blocs to amend the parliamentary procedure for holding a no-confidence vote. This

⁵⁹ ITAR-TASS, "Moldovan Parliament Accepts Resignation of Speaker," (accessed via LexisNexis), 3 February 1993a.

⁶⁰ Cox and McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*; Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*.

⁶¹ William E. Crowther and David M. Olson, "Committee Systems in New Democratic Parliaments," in *Committees in Post-Communist Democratic Parliaments: Comparative Institutionization* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2002). This was illustrated in January 1993 when several deputies in leadership positions resigned and party identification was not a significant factor in choosing their replacements. See ITAR-TASS, "Moldovan Parliament Accepts Resignation of Speaker."

amendment lowered the threshold from a two-thirds vote to a simple majority.⁶²

Consequently, in 1991, the parliament held a no-confidence vote for Prime Minister Druc, which garnered 207 votes in the 360-seat parliament.⁶³ However, the Agrarians were not strong enough to put into place an Agrarian candidate. Instead, the less radical Valeriu Muravschi served for one year until he resigned in May 1992. By then, the Agrarians and President Snegur had gained enough strength to replace Muravschi with an Agrarian candidate, Andrei Sangheli.⁶⁴

Even with an alliance between the majority in parliament and the prime minister, the Agrarian party was far from the dominant force in parliament. While Sangheli and the government were able to assist in negotiating a compromise with the Gagauz, the Agrarians had to pass the legislation to make it law. Unfortunately, the Agrarians' control of legislative proceedings was weakened by their lack of an absolute majority and inability to replace deputies in leadership positions. Without strong majority rule, it was difficult to set the agenda and ensure policy outcomes. The party's strength was also negatively affected by veto players who impeded the Agrarians' ability to rule.

VETO PLAYERS

From 1991 to 1993, institutional veto players weakened the Agrarians' control of the legislative agenda. Having just a plurality in the parliament, the Agrarians were particularly vulnerable to the power of their opponents. For instance, the Popular Front held the same legislative leadership positions in parliament they had acquired when they held the majority in 1990. As described above, even though the parliament had changed, the parliamentary chairman, the First Deputy to the chairman, and a majority of the permanent commission

⁶² TASS, "No-Confidence Vote in Moldavian Premier," (22 May 1991), reprinted in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 25 May 1991c.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Crowther, "Nationalism and Political Transformation in Moldova," 300.

chairmanships had not.⁶⁵ These formal positions became veto players in the legislative process. They could block the Gagauz autonomy legislation from being put on the legislative agenda, even though it had been supported by the president and prime minister.⁶⁶ When a compromise plan for autonomy finally made it onto agenda, the permanent commission chairman became a veto player by amending the legislation to make it unacceptable to the Gagauz.

One reason the veto players were strong was the ideological distance between the Popular Front and the Agrarian party. In general, the significant distance between the two groups made it less likely that a 'negotiated settlement' could be found.⁶⁷ Stark differences on the issue of Gagauz autonomy separated the two parties. The Popular Front objected to a compromise with the Gagauz for two main reasons. First, the Popular Front did not accept the Gagauz claim of being a nationality and worthy of self-determination. Instead, Moldovan nationalists considered the Gagauz an ethnic minority. The second objection was to Gagauz demands for territorial autonomy. For Moldovan nationalists, the Gagauz were colonists and had no legitimate claim for territorial autonomy on the historic homeland of Moldova. The cohesive nature of the Popular Front and its splinter groups on this issue, combined with the ideological distance between the leadership and the Agrarian party, made the Popular Front leaders formidable veto players who weakened the majority's agenda control.

With only a weak majority (depending on the issue) and strong veto players, Moldova's leaders could not be expected to push decisive proposals like Gagauz autonomy through the parliament.⁶⁸ As Shugart and Haggard (2001) argue, in an "ideologically polarized legislature" strong veto players increase the potential for "deadlock, instability and

⁶⁵ ITAR-TASS, "Moldovan Parliament Accepts Resignation of Speaker."

⁶⁶ FBIS, "Clashes in Parliament, Need for New Elections Viewed," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (17 November 1992), translated in FBIS JPRS Report, FBIS-USR-92-155, 4 December 1992a. They also blocked legislation which addressed the Transnistrian situation.

⁶⁷ Aleman and Tsebelis, "Presidents, Parties, and Agenda Control in Latin America".

⁶⁸ Cox and McCubbins, "The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes," 27.

balkanization.”⁶⁹ As effective veto players, the Popular Front made any significant or cohesive policy change more difficult to achieve.⁷⁰ Even if the Agrarian party succeeded in getting the draft autonomy bill on the legislative agenda, it still could not produce the needed votes to make policy change.

PARTY DISCIPLINE

A further limiting factor in producing policy change was party discipline. In Moldova, political leaders negotiated difficult compromise solutions like the one on Gagauz autonomy only to see the measure fail when it was presented on the floor of the parliament. Some political systems use certain restrictive rules to help them push through controversial legislation. One example is the ‘package vote’ used in France by the government to protect legislation from changes or amendments and force parliament to vote to either accept or reject it.⁷¹ The ‘package vote’ is used by the government against its own majority to prevent amendments from dissenting backbench deputies in a similar way that ‘closed rules’ are used in the US Congress.⁷² These restrictive rules are used to “preserve the essential elements of deals cut outside the legislature.”⁷³ Without restrictive rules, Moldova’s political leaders were forced to “work harder” to protect legislation.⁷⁴ This was mainly due to the low level of institutionalization of Moldova’s parliament and the lack of constitutional provisions.⁷⁵

Party leaders found it challenging to enforce discipline. There were few resources or means available to parties by which to control rank and file deputies. As in other post-communist countries, political party structures in Moldova were generally weak.⁷⁶ Deputies had been elected under the Soviet system in single-member districts designed to

⁶⁹ Shugart and Haggard, "Institutions and Public Policy in Presidential Systems," 65.

⁷⁰ Russia experienced similar problems in attempting to forge a coherent policy of economic reforms. See Chaisty, *Legislative Politics and Economic Power in Russia*, 193-94.

⁷¹ Huber, *Rationalizing Parliament: Legislative Institutions and Party Politics in France*, 3.

⁷² Huber, "Restrictive Legislative Procedures in France and the United States," 683.

⁷³ Huber, *Rationalizing Parliament: Legislative Institutions and Party Politics in France*, 180.

⁷⁴ FBIS, "Parliament Handling of Separatism Assailed."

⁷⁵ Crowther and Olson, "Committee Systems in New Democratic Parliaments," 187.

⁷⁶ Crowther, "The Politics of Democratization in Postcommunist Moldova," 309.

accommodate Communist Party control. Consequently, Agrarian party leaders could not remove or threaten to remove a deputy from a party list before the upcoming election as the electoral laws had not been rewritten to accommodate a multi-party system. They also could not remove or place deputies into particularly desirable or influential committee positions as the legislative positions were controlled by the presidium or voted on by the entire parliament.⁷⁷ Additionally, party leaders lacked resources such as office support or staff to use as side payments to secure deputy allegiance. Without these tools, the leaders had few means by which to enforce party discipline.

Because Moldova's political leaders lacked the means to enforce party discipline, tenuous compromises reached in parliamentary commissions were vulnerable to defeat.⁷⁸ Regarding the contentious issue of Gagauz autonomy, individual deputies took up positions on the wide spectrum of feelings about minority nationalities. Without the ability to control the rank and file, majority party leaders were unlikely to safeguard delicate concessions on this contentious issue.

I now apply this insight on Moldova's political actors and the available agenda control to the events of 1991 to 1993. After political power began to shift from the Popular Front to the Agrarians, Moldova and the Gagauz sides began to work for a mutually agreed solution. President Snegur and Prime Minister Sangheli both supported a compromise and endorsed efforts to reach a settlement. However, the Agrarian-led majority was weakened by strong veto players and the limited means to ensure party discipline. Without sufficient agenda control in parliament Moldova's political leaders failed to safeguard the negotiated compromise on territorial autonomy to resolve the Gagauz question.

⁷⁷ Party leaders traditionally hold this authority to appoint committee members. See Cox and McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*; Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*.

⁷⁸ Herbert Döring, "Controversy, Time Constraint, and Restrictive Rules," in *Patterns of Parliamentary Behavior: Passage of Legislation across Western Europe*, ed. Herbert Döring and Mark Hallerberg (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 166.

4.2.3 Stalemate in Moldova

After the fall of the Soviet Union, there was a flurry of activity to make progress on the Gagauz issue. At the end of 1991, Snegur began speaking about a form of national autonomy for the Gagauz.⁷⁹ He championed the work of the Department of National Relations and its draft laws to solve the Gagauz problem.⁸⁰ After his direct election as president, Snegur promised to make further proposals to the Gagauz and Transnistrians and urged parliament to settle the political situation through constructive dialogue.⁸¹ At the beginning of 1992, President Snegur participated in conferences designed to bring the sides together.⁸² Snegur met with his Gagauz counterpart, Stepan Topal to work out the details of a settlement.⁸³ This preparatory work by Snegur resulted in an April 1992 meeting between the two sides. Moldova's leadership stated their willingness to grant the Gagauz a special status.⁸⁴ These meetings set the stage for more intense negotiations on creating an autonomous region for the Gagauz.

After the tumultuous 1992 summer, talks resumed in earnest between the two sides. Moldova had just endured a civil war with Transnistria and a major shake-up of their government. By September 1992, the new prime minister, Andrei Sangheli, announced with President Snegur that "mutually acceptable compromises" had been reached with Gagauz leaders.⁸⁵ The compromise between government leaders and the Gagauz detailed an agreed level of autonomy for the Gagauz. This resulted in more meetings between Snegur and

⁷⁹ FBIS, "Mircea Snegur: We Can Hardly Find the Fuel to Send the Prime Minister to Moscow."

⁸⁰ Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author; *Nezavisimaya Moldova*, "Ukaz O Sozdanii Gosudarstvennoi Komissii Pravitel'stva Respubliki Moldova Po Problemam Iuzhnoi Zony."

⁸¹ INTERFAX, "President Notes Possible 'New Conflict'."

⁸² FBIS, "International Experts Do Not Welcome the Unification of Moldova and Romania," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (25 January 1992), translated in FBIS JPRS Report, FBIS-USR-92-018, 25 February 1992d; INTERFAX, "Helsinki Committee Conference Held in Komrat."

⁸³ INTERFAX, "Gagauz Republic Struggles for Independence," (22 March 1992), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-92-056, 23 March 1992b.

⁸⁴ INTERFAX, "Gagauz Agrees Not to Form Independent Republic."

⁸⁵ INTERFAX, "'Sources' Report Chişinău, Gagauz Consultations," (22 September 1992), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-92-187, 25 September 1992f.

Gagauz leaders in October 1992.⁸⁶ Ultimately a task force was set up by Moldova's government to work out details of the proposal.

The government's Department of National Relations, operating under Snegur's direction, assisted the task force and found common ground for a mutual agreement among Moldova's officials.⁸⁷ Moldova laid out a basic statement of coexistence which outlined how the Gagauz republic was part of Moldova. Gagauz President Stepan Topal signed an agreement of understanding that the Gagauz republic would be a self-administered political structure in Moldova.⁸⁸ The Moldovan leadership then readied a proposal for Gagauz autonomy. The proposal included a legislative body, constitution, elections, appointment of judges, and control over budgetary matters.⁸⁹ Snegur, Sangheli, and some members of the parliament's presidium shared a vision of solving the Gagauz question when parliament returned from their end of year holiday. The stage was set for the long awaited reconciliation to take place between the Gagauz and Moldova.

How did Moldova reach a consensus on Gagauz autonomy? One reason is that after the nationalist euphoria of independence wore off, the reality of governance set in. Snegur recognized that the identity politics of 1989 to 1990 had exacerbated the Gagauz issue.⁹⁰ Once the Soviet Union collapsed and international recognition as a new state was obtained, Moldova began to focus on the problems which had been created during its contentious road to statehood. With a more pragmatic and hence moderate view of the political landscape, Snegur pushed Moldova towards compromise on the Gagauz issue.⁹¹ As the Popular Front

⁸⁶ INTERFAX, "Snegur Prepared to Offer Gagauzians 'Broad' Rights," (2 October 1992), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC92-000124227, 2 October 1992d; ROMPRES, "Snegur Meets Gagauz Ethnic--Says Federation Impossible," (1 October 1992), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-92-192, 2 October 1992b.

⁸⁷ Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author.

⁸⁸ FBIS, "Principles of Peaceful Coexistence of Gagauzia and Moldova," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (8 October 1992), translated in FBIS JPRS Report, FBIS-USR-92-141, 4 November 1992f.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

⁹¹ INTERFAX, "President Notes Possible 'New Conflict'." See also Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

lost its grip on power in the parliament and then in the government, Snegur gained allies like Sangheli and Agrarian party members who helped move Moldova toward a settlement.

Another reason Moldova decided to compromise was that the Gagauz demands were consistent and reasonable. Since early 1989, Gagauz leaders had repeatedly requested a form of territorial autonomy. These focused demands were unlike other separatist cases, where autonomy was viewed as a stepping stone for the broader goal of independence.⁹²

Additionally, the national territorial structure was the preferred method of identity protection used by the Soviet Union.⁹³ Moldova's elite, like former communist leaders Snegur and Sangheli, appreciated why the Gagauz demanded that particular solution.⁹⁴

By the end of 1992, Moldova's president, government, and several leaders in parliament had all agreed upon a sufficient level of territorial autonomy for the Gagauz. The formal bill had 22 statutes which established a people's assembly and local governor (called a *Başkan*).⁹⁵ In December 1992 the draft bill was completed and tentatively approved by Moldova's governmental leaders and the Gagauz.⁹⁶ The bill was then forwarded to parliament for their consideration and passage.

Unfortunately for the Gagauz, Moldova's parliament struggled with divisive political conflict between the majority and the opposition. The Agrarian party struggled for political control. As discussed, the Popular Front factions, now in the opposition, were overrepresented in the leadership positions on the presidium and as permanent commission chairmen. Popular Front leaders were simultaneously agenda setters and veto players. It was

⁹² Autonomous structures existed for Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, Chechnya in Russia, and Kosovo in Serbia. In these cases, Kolstø observes that complete secession was the only acceptable solution for the separatists. See Kolstø, "Territorial Autonomy as a Minority Rights Regime in Post-Communist Societies."

⁹³ Ibid, 203-05.

⁹⁴ See Sangheli, Personal Interview with Author; Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

⁹⁵ Grebeshnikov Archives, *Proekt: Zakon Respubliki Moldova "Ob Osobom Provovom Statuse Gagauz Eri (Gagauzii)*, signed by Mircea Snegur, 25 December 1992.

⁹⁶ ROMPRES, "Snegur, Sangheli Meet with Gagauz Leaders," (30 December 1992), reprinted in FBIS JPRS Report, FBIS-SOV-92-252, 31 December 1992c.

this weak majority combined with determined veto players that set the stage for the political battle over Gagauz autonomy.

THE FIRST DEADLOCK

After months of negotiations between Moldova and the Gagauz, President Snegur and Prime Minister Sangheli sent parliament the draft bill.⁹⁷ The draft bill was handled by Alexandru Mosanu, the Popular Front parliamentary chairman and his first deputy, Ion Hadarca, another Popular Front leader. Both Mosanu and Hadarca were supported by several members of the presidium who were also ardent nationalists. These leaders continued to be vigilant Popular Front idealists while the majority of the deputies in parliament had become more moderate.

Chairman Mosanu and his deputy Hadarca ensured that Gagauz autonomy was not approved.⁹⁸ Even though Snegur and Sangheli had the support of the Agrarian bloc, Mosanu and Hadarca successfully used their power in the presidium to keep the proposed compromise for Gagauz autonomy off the parliamentary agenda.⁹⁹ As ultra-nationalists, Mosanu felt that autonomy for the Gagauz would hamper reconciliation efforts with Romania. The Popular Front position was that autonomy for the Gagauz would mark the beginning of the separation of Romanian lands.¹⁰⁰ To protect the possibility of a future reconciliation, Mosanu prevented the bill from being considered. Snegur, Sangheli, and Agrarian party leaders were too weak to counter Mosanu's obstruction.

After keeping the Gagauz issue off the agenda, Mosanu and Hadarca used a similar tactic to block another Snegur-backed plan to hold a country-wide referendum on Moldova's

⁹⁷ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, "Preodolenie Gagauzskogo Krizisa--Drugim Nauka?," 16 January 1993c.

⁹⁸ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, "Separatistskii Tandem Tiraspol'--Komrat: Real'nost' I Perspektivy," 2 March 1993d.

⁹⁹ FBIS, "Gagauz Opposition Calls For Autonomous Economic Region," *Izvestiya*, (26 January 1993), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-016, 27 January 1993g. Chapter 11 of the carry over MSSR constitution gave the parliamentary chairman and the presidium control of many parliamentary legislative functions including setting the agenda for each session of parliament

¹⁰⁰ FBIS, "Deputies Score Draft Law on Gagauz Status," *Izvestiya*, (15 May 1993), translated in JPRS Report, FBIS-USR-93-065, 26 May 1993e.

future as an independent state.¹⁰¹ Mosanu claimed that the referendum would lead to more conflict within the troubled country and again used his agenda-setting power to prevent the majority from passing the legislation. While the majority of deputies had expressed their support for the measure, Mosanu and the Popular Front ensured the measure failed on the parliamentary floor.¹⁰²

The blocking of the draft autonomy bill and the referendum proved to be the breaking point for the parliament. Mosanu's action's caused a backlash among the deputies as the parliamentary leadership was clearly acting against the preferences of the majority. As a result, three of the five major parliamentary factions representing 168 deputies walked out of parliament after calling the actions of the leadership a "conspiracy" and demanding new elections.¹⁰³ Led by the Agrarian party leaders, the coalition of factions used the quorum rule to force parliament to adjourn. The opposition, led by the Popular Front, was unable to hold a session of parliament until the deadlock was resolved. To avoid new elections and the disbanding of parliament, Mosanu, Hadarca, and three members of the presidium from the Popular Front resigned.¹⁰⁴ As a result, the principle veto players were removed albeit by their own submission.

To clear the deadlock in Moldova's parliament, a more moderate leader was needed to replace Mosanu. Three candidates submitted their names for the position. One candidate was Pușcaș, who had served as one of the deputies to Mosanu and led the Gagauz commission in 1989. The second was the nationalistic Arseni, who was chairman of the Nationalities Permanent Commission and co-chaired the Joint Commission which looked at the Gagauz issue in 1990. The third was Lucinschi, who had lost to Snegur for parliamentary

¹⁰¹ ITAR-TASS, "Parliament Deputies Ready to 'Give up' Power," (28 January 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-018, 29 January 1993c.

¹⁰² Current Digest of the Soviet Press, "Split in Moldova's Parliament," *Izvestiya*, (accessed via LexisNexis), 17 February 1993.

¹⁰³ ITAR-TASS, "Parliament Deputies Ready to 'Give up' Power."

¹⁰⁴ ITAR-TASS, "Moldovan Parliament Accepts Resignation of Speaker."

chairman in 1990, and who served as the chairman of the Reconciliation Commission on the Gagauz issue in 1990, and served as Moldova's ambassador to the Russian Federation after the break-up of the Soviet Union. While all three had chaired Gagauz-related parliamentary commissions, none of the candidates was an Agrarian party member. The vote required an absolute majority and the Agrarian party was not large enough to ensure the new leader came from within its ranks.

The Agrarians threw their support behind the most moderate candidate, Lucinschi. He was elected by a nearly 90% margin of the vote.¹⁰⁵ Lucinschi had excellent name recognition and was considered a moderate who appealed to both sides of the political spectrum. He was seen as a true Moldovan by the nationalists and by the moderates as someone who would keep relations with the former-Soviet partners.¹⁰⁶ Even the most conservative deputies liked this former Communist Party First Secretary.

The Gagauz were optimistic that Lucinschi's accession to parliamentary chairman would result in the "fastest possible settlement of the conflict in Gagauzia."¹⁰⁷ Kendigelian, who was the chairman of the Gagauz Parliament, expressed confidence that Lucinschi would lead the parliament to approve a version of territorial autonomy for the Gagauz.¹⁰⁸ Lucinschi, for his part, promised only to deal with the Gagauz peacefully.¹⁰⁹

NEW LEADER–NEW COMMISSION

Lucinschi, though not from the Agrarian party, enjoyed considerable support from the Agrarian-led bloc of deputies. The Agrarians now put the parliamentary opposition on the defensive. For Moldova's political leaders like Snegur and Sangheli, they hoped Lucinschi

¹⁰⁵ INTERFAX, "Officials Cited on Relations between Snegur, Lucinschi," (5 February 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-024, 8 February 1993e.

¹⁰⁶ FBIS, "Moldova Pinning Hopes of Civil Peace on Lucinschi," *Izvestiya*, (9 February 1993), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-030, 17 February 1993j.

¹⁰⁷ INTERFAX, "Officials Cited on Relations between Snegur, Lucinschi."

¹⁰⁸ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, "Komrat--Za Federativnoe Ustroistvo Moldovy," 17 February 1993a.

¹⁰⁹ FBIS, "Moldova Pinning Hopes of Civil Peace on Lucinschi."

was the tipping point in favour of a settlement. His accession to the chairmanship was viewed as progress towards securing the territorial integrity of Moldova.

Snegur and Sangheli worked to build support for a new solution. Prime Minister Sangheli proposed and the parliament endorsed a two-year government program, which included a renewed emphasis on creating a special status for the Gagauz region.¹¹⁰ Sangheli told the parliament that the two-year program was essential to overcoming the deep economic crisis Moldova faced.¹¹¹ Snegur shifted his emphasis from a referendum on the status of Moldova to a referendum on a new constitution which would include provisions for special status for the Gagauz. The presidential office, headed by Snegur's ally, Victor Grebeshnikov, led the efforts to draft another agreement with the Gagauz when parliament was not in session.¹¹²

On 18 March 1993, Lucinschi announced the formation of a new commission to determine the exact status for the Gagauz and for Transnistria.¹¹³ Lucinschi then ended the parliamentary session and the commissions began their work in preparation for the next session. Lucinschi chaired the twenty-eight member commission which was divided into two equal groups. One subcommission, headed by Nicolae Andronic, was to study the Transnistrian question and the other subcommission, headed by Mihail Cotorobai, was to study the Gagauz issue. Cotorobai had served on the presidium as chairman of the Permanent Commission for Local Self-government and Administration since 1990. Though he was appointed when the Popular Front held a strong majority, Cotorobai was a moderate whose experience and strong legal background were invaluable to the new commission.

¹¹⁰ INTERFAX, "Premier Submits Government Economic Program to Parliament," (4 March 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-042, 5 March 1993i.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author.

¹¹³ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, "Osenniaia Sessia Zakonshilas' V Marte," 26 March 1993b.

The new parliamentary commission moved forward to secure an agreement by May 1993 in order to report their proposals to the next session of parliament. On 6 April, the Gagauz subcommission met in Chişinău with Cotorobai leading the Moldovan delegation. Cotorobai, as chairman of the Permanent Commission for Local Self-Administration and Local Economy, was more intent on making Gagauz autonomy fit within the larger reorganization of local administration than in fulfilling a political pledge to solve the Gagauz issue.¹¹⁴ After intense negotiations, the commission approved a draft plan in the beginning of May 1993 which would grant a special legal status for the Gagauz within the broader restructuring plan. Cotorobai lauded the Gagauz for their willingness to compromise and said the draft bill gave the Gagauz a firm guarantee for their rights and interests.¹¹⁵

The Gagauz leaders set about gathering local support. They submitted the draft bill to an Extraordinary Congress of Gagauz Deputies on 8 May 1993 in Ceadâr-Lunga. A few amendments were offered with the most dramatic change being the insertion of an article which guaranteed the right of self-determination for the Gagauz in the event that Moldova changed its status as an independent state.¹¹⁶ This was to guarantee the Gagauz a constitutional right to break away if Moldova ever reunited with Romania. With that addition the Gagauz Congress approved the draft and awaited its passage by Moldova's parliament.

Snegur also threw his support behind the settlement and was optimistic that a compromise had been found. In a 5 May 1993 interview, Snegur predicted that the Gagauz issue was close to resolution.¹¹⁷ A week later, Snegur addressed the new session of

¹¹⁴ Cotorobai, Personal Interview with Author.

¹¹⁵ INTERFAX, "Presidential Bulletin," (7 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Review, FBIS-SOV-93-089-A, 11 May 1993k.

¹¹⁶ BASAPRESS, "Ethnic Gagauz Reserve Right to Self-Determination," (11 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-091, 13 May 1993f; FBIS, "Autonomy Offered to the Gagauz," *Izvestiya*, (13 May 1993), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-092, 14 May 1993c.

¹¹⁷ FBIS, "President on Conflicts, Economic Problems," *Trud*, (5 May 1993), translated in FBIS JPRS Report, FBIS-USR-93-059, 12 May 1993p.

parliament and urged the deputies to support the compromise.¹¹⁸ He expressed his regret that the Supreme Soviet was not able to solve the Gagauz problem in 1990.¹¹⁹ He called on the parliament to adopt the bill to (1) strengthen Moldova's image, (2) stabilize the situation, and (3) draw new investments to improve the living standards in the country.¹²⁰

The draft law looked poised to sail through parliament. It was part of Prime Minister Sangheli's government program, endorsed by President Snegur, and approved by the parliamentary commission chaired by Lucinschi, the chairman of the parliament. The three most powerful political leaders in Moldova had worked to bring about the compromise which had been approved by the Gagauz. Local media reported how after three years of discussions, mistrust had been replaced by hope as parliament was ready to guarantee a broad form of autonomy for the Gagauz.¹²¹ On 12 May 1993, the first item for business on the parliamentary agenda was the draft law on the Gagauz region. Cotorobai, the chairman of the subcommission which drafted the bill, told the parliament to "reject personal ambitions" and adopt the bill.¹²² Deputies from the Agrarian Party announced that the draft law should pass or the parliament would have to resign.¹²³ But even with pressure from the key political leaders and the largest parliamentary party, the bill failed to win parliament's approval.

THE SECOND DEADLOCK

The second deadlock in parliament confirmed both the weakness of the majority party and the strength of the veto players. Unlike what had happened in January under the previous parliamentary chairman, Lucinschi put the draft Gagauz law onto the legislative agenda and brought it up for debate. Immediately, the draft law was attacked by the opposition who put

¹¹⁸ BASAPRESS, "Parliament Discusses Draft Law on Status of Gagauz," (12 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-091, 13 May 1993m.

¹¹⁹ INTERFAX, "Deputies Proceed with Discussion on Gagauzian Bill," (13 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC93-000072678, 13 May 1993a.

¹²⁰ BASAPRESS, "Parliament Discusses Draft Law on Status of Gagauz."; INTERFAX, "Deputies Proceed with Discussion on Gagauzian Bill."

¹²¹ FBIS, "Autonomy Offered to the Gagauz."

¹²² INTERFAX, "Deputies Proceed with Discussion on Gagauzian Bill."

¹²³ FBIS, "Deputies Score Draft Law on Gagauz Status."

forward four major objections: (1) the region of 'Gagauzia' was sprinkled with several non-Gagauz villages; (2) autonomy for the Gagauz would be the beginning of the federalization of Moldova; (3) autonomy would be a euphemism for a Gagauz state on the territory of Moldova; and (4) the Gagauz were an ethnic group and minority, not a nation entitled to the right of self-determination.¹²⁴

The parliamentary opposition to the project was led by the remnant factions of the Popular Front. Alexandru Arseni, who had recently lost his bid to become the parliamentary speaker, now headed his own parliamentary faction called the Democratic Labour Party—another Popular Front break off.¹²⁵ Arseni called the draft law a "time bomb" which would lead to "ethnic purification" of the region and future internal conflicts.¹²⁶ The Christian Democratic Popular Front published an appeal asking other deputies to oppose the draft law as it would "bind Bessarabia to the old empire" and make unification with Romania "impossible."¹²⁷ These veto players were able to find common ground within the Popular Front factions and generate a strong commitment to blocking the passage of the draft law. They were extremely cohesive and very politically distant from the compromise negotiated by the government, majority leadership and the Gagauz. As expected, this made the exercise of finding middle ground with the opposition very difficult.¹²⁸

The bill's future was dependent upon whether the leadership could withstand the opposition's onslaught. After the hard fought compromises had been reached by the Cotorobai Commission, any changes put the bill's future in jeopardy. Understanding this, the opposition worked to defeat the bill by putting forward amendments to the compromise draft.

¹²⁴ INTERFAX, "Deputies Proceed with Discussion on Gagauzian Bill."; ROMPRES, "Parliament Discusses Draft Law on Status of Gagauz," (12 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-091, 13 May 1993.

¹²⁵ FBIS, "Parliament Handling of Separatism Assailed."

¹²⁶ BASAPRESS, "Draft Law on Gagauz Autonomy Submitted to Parliament," (13 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-092, 15 May 1993e.

¹²⁷ FBIS, "Appeal of the Christian Democratic Popular Front," *Cotidianul*, (13 May 1993), translated in FBIS Document, FC93-000076411, 13 May 1993a.

¹²⁸ Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*, 185-86.

The amendments included: (1) changing the name for the region from a “national territorial autonomy” to “administrative territorial unit”; (2) the deletion of the right of Gagauz self-determination if Moldova changed its independent status; (3) exclusion of certain settlements from the autonomous region; and (4) the deletion of the term “Gagauz people.”¹²⁹ These Popular Front vestiges requested that Cotorobai’s Commission review some of their proposed amendments and provide a recommendation for their inclusion.

A week later when the parliament reconvened, Lucinschi, as chairman of the parliament, opened the session and again endorsed the work by Cotorobai.¹³⁰ In an effort to win a sufficient number of votes, Lucinschi acknowledged that changes had been made to the Cotorobai Commission’s draft proposal to appease certain groups. He urged the deputies and parliamentary factions to give the new draft serious consideration.¹³¹ Lucinschi was attempting to find enough votes to pass the revised legislation which had been endorsed by the Gagauz.

As Lucinschi struggled to pass the draft legislation, three groups watched the parliamentary proceedings almost as observers. One was President Snegur and his advisors who lobbied the parliament to accept a compromise and criticized the minority bloc’s opposition.¹³² Snegur’s adviser on ethnic issues, Viktor Grebeshnikov, warned the opposition to stop living in 1990 when the Popular Front controlled the parliament.¹³³ He argued that the most realistic opportunity for resolving the territorial problems facing

¹²⁹ BASAPRESS, “Comrat Deputies Displeased with Talks on Self-Determination,” (13 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC93-000072999, 14 May 1993a. In the same article, the Gagauz leadership voiced their opposition to the proposed changes.

¹³⁰ P. K. Lucinschi, “O Deiatel’nosti Parlamentskoi Komissii Po Uregulirovaniu Voprosov V Vostochnykh Raionakh I Naselennykh Punktakh Kompaktnogo Prozhivaniia Gagauzov V Respublike Moldova,” *Nezavisimaya Moldova*, 18 May 1993.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² FBIS, “Snegur Calls for Compromise with Gagauz, Dniester Regions,” *ITAR-TASS*, (20 May 1993), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-097, 21 May 1993r.

¹³³ INTERFAX, “Snegur’s Aide: Law on Gagauzian Rights Urgently Needed,” (20 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC93-000074989, 20 May 1993n.

Moldova was to first solve the Gagauz question.¹³⁴ Another group on the outside was the Gagauz, who observed the actions of the opposition groups in parliament and issued a declaration reminding the parliament that any law passed would have to be approved by the Gagauz Supreme Soviet for it to become valid.¹³⁵ The Gagauz were nervous that key provisions of the bill would be taken out. The third group was Transnistrian authorities who voiced their opposition to the draft bill. They were upset by the proposed agreement as it weakened Transnistria's call for a federation in Moldova.¹³⁶

During the parliament's consideration of the latest draft, the tentative compromise began to unravel. Opposition leader Alexandru Arseni took the floor as chairman of the Commission on Human Rights and National Minorities and introduced a new draft law as an alternative to the Cotorobai version.¹³⁷ Arseni's draft rejected the territorial autonomy approach and used a law which guaranteed rights of national minorities.¹³⁸ He argued that the territorial autonomy approach would lead to the federalization of Moldova and provoke inter-ethnic conflict.¹³⁹ As the debate proceeded, deputies became "confused" by the two separate drafts, which was a deliberate political diversion by Arseni in order to sink the compromise draft.¹⁴⁰ According to Snegur, some Agrarian deputies were uncertain how to vote on the different drafts being considered due to a lack of strong leadership during the floor debate.¹⁴¹

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ BASAPRESS, "Comrat Wants All Laws to Be Passed by Gagauz Supreme Soviet," (18 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC93-000074420, 18 May 1993b.

¹³⁶ BASAPRESS, "Dniester Ideologist Warns against Dangers of 'Gagauz Eri'," (22 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC93-000076463, 24 May 1993d.

¹³⁷ Arseni, Personal Interview with Author; Ion Ungureanu, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 19 November 2005.

¹³⁸ Arseni, Personal Interview with Author; BASAPRESS, "Human Rights Official Comments on Gagauzian Issue," (22 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC93-000076468, 24 May 1993j.

¹³⁹ BASAPRESS, "PDM States Position on Gagauzian Self-Determination," (22 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC93-000076466, 24 May 1993n.

¹⁴⁰ Ungureanu, Personal Interview with Author.

¹⁴¹ Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

The final blow to the compromise came in the form of opposition amendments to the original draft law. Moldova's assurances to the Gagauz were ignored as commission chairman Mihail Cotorobai revised the draft bill and resubmitted it for debate on the floor.¹⁴² Cotorobai's revised draft incorporated several of the changes requested by the Popular Front factions.¹⁴³ These included the dropping of the provision guaranteeing self-determination if Moldova changed its independent status and renaming the region from a "national" unit to an "administrative" one.¹⁴⁴ Upon inspection of the new draft, the Gagauz deputies walked out of parliament in protest.¹⁴⁵ The Gagauz deputies complained that parliament was repeating what had happened in 1990 when the parliament rejected their draft law asking for autonomy.

Cotorobai defended his actions by stating that a difference of opinion had existed among commission members about the original draft bill and "no final decision" had been made on several key points. In the revised bill, Cotorobai had unilaterally changed those provisions which had been included to meet Gagauz demands.¹⁴⁶ It was these revisions which caused the Gagauz leadership to reject what it considered another version of "cultural autonomy."¹⁴⁷

The continued stalemate on Gagauz autonomy can be linked directly to a lack of agenda control by Moldova's leadership. First, the majority party leaders did not control key parliamentary leadership positions. Cotorobai, the commission chairman, was not a member of the Agrarian bloc and had been appointed when parliament had been run by the Popular Front. The lack of influence of the Agrarian party leaders became critical when Cotorobai's dedication to the legislation started to waver. It was Cotorobai who justified changes to the

¹⁴² FBIS, "Parliament Switches Bills on Gagauz Status," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (27 May 1993), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-102, 28 May 1993m.

¹⁴³ FBIS, "Gagauz Deputies Walk out of Parliament Session," *Izvestiya*, (28 May 1993), translated in FBIS Document, FC93-000079834, 1 June 1993f.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ FBIS, "Parliament Switches Bills on Gagauz Status.," Ungureanu, Personal Interview with Author.

¹⁴⁶ Cotorobai, "Izlozhenie Motivov K Proektu Zakona 'Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Avtonomnogo Administrativno-Territorial'nogo Okruga Gagauz Eri'."

¹⁴⁷ FBIS, "Gagauz Deputies Walk out of Parliament Session."

draft law instead of trying to restore and push through the original compromise. It was Cotorobai who argued against two of the crucial points the Gagauz had included: a self-determination guarantee for the Gagauz and recognition as a nation.¹⁴⁸ Cotorobai went on to publicly defend parliament's right to amend the draft law even if the consequence was losing the negotiated compromise. Moldova's political leaders watched as Cotorobai changed the draft bill or allowed it to be changed beyond the limits of what was acceptable to the Gagauz.¹⁴⁹

Second, Moldova's political leaders lacked sufficient agenda control due to strong veto players and weak party discipline. Arseni and the deputies from the Popular Front clearly sought to derail the legislation. The Popular Front was ideologically opposed to any form of autonomy, effectively cutting off hope of a compromise between the majority and the minority. They played up the nationalist aspects of the bill, working hard to convince independent deputies and Moldovan backbenchers of the Agrarian party that the bill was anti-Moldovan. Their rhetoric included arguments that granting autonomy would federalize their tiny country, make Moldovans living in the Gagauz region a 'minority' in their own country, and permit the Gagauz to claim the autonomous area as their historic homeland. Snegur observed later that when these veto players attacked the draft bill, deputies in the majority began to be hesitant.¹⁵⁰ Without party discipline, the Agrarian party leadership, in addition to Snegur, Sangheli, and Lucinschi, could not muster the votes needed to pass the original compromise. The lack of any substantive reward or punishment system left leaders without an effective means to secure the support of rank-and-file deputies.

¹⁴⁸ Cotorobai, "Izlozhenie Motivov K Proektu Zakona 'Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Avtonomnogo Administrativno-Territorial'nogo Okruga Gagauz Eri'."

¹⁴⁹ Cotorobai felt that one reason the autonomy draft failed was because it was tied too closely to the whole project on administrative reform. This reform was unpopular with the parliament as it removed many of the positions then held by deputies. See Cotorobai, Personal Interview with Author.

¹⁵⁰ Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

Third, the lack of agenda control can also be attributed to the inability of the parliamentary leaders to control the procedures on the parliament's floor.¹⁵¹ The leadership had failed to prevent the draft legislation from being marked up "beyond recognition."¹⁵² Amendments by the opposition changed key provisions. For example, instead of recognizing the Gagauz as a people, a new statement was inserted stating that Moldova recognized the Gagauz as an ethnic minority. It also removed the Gagauz right of self-determination in the case of Moldova's union with Romania.¹⁵³

Lucinschi, sensing that the deal was being lost, reacted slowly to the situation. He attempted to salvage the draft the next day by downplaying the harmful effect of the amendments which had prompted the walkout by Gagauz deputies. He renewed his commitment to finding a "consensus" on the issue.¹⁵⁴ However, Gagauz leaders reiterated their belief that the parliament was not really interested in resolving the Gagauz problem.¹⁵⁵ To show their displeasure, the Gagauz deputies walked out of the parliament a second time.¹⁵⁶ In response, Lucinschi decided to adjourn parliament for two weeks, acknowledging that disagreements within the parliamentary majority and the strength of the veto players had caused the bill to be changed to the dissatisfaction of the Gagauz.¹⁵⁷ Lucinschi promised to "improve the bill" by taking into account the view of Gagauz representatives in order to find a "mutually acceptable compromise solution."¹⁵⁸ He reemphasized the need to solve the

¹⁵¹ One of the agenda powers of majorities is the power to protect bills from amendments on the floor. See Cox, "On the Effects of Legislative Rules," 25; Huber, "Restrictive Legislative Procedures in France and the United States."

¹⁵² FBIS, "Gagauz Deputies Walk out of Parliament Session."

¹⁵³ FBIS, "Autonomy Is Being Put Off," *Holos Ukrayiny*, (1 June 1993), translated in FBIS Document, FC93-000080884, 3 June 1993b.

¹⁵⁴ BASAPRESS, "Lucinschi on Efforts to Solve Gagauz Issue," (26 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-102, 28 May 1993k.

¹⁵⁵ BASAPRESS, "Gagauzia Insists on Self-Determination," (26 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-102, 28 May 1993i.

¹⁵⁶ FBIS, "Gagauz Deputies Walk out of Parliament Session."

¹⁵⁷ Sangheli also acknowledged that the strength of veto players like the Popular Front was due to the distance between their position and the compromise agreement. See Sangheli, Personal Interview with Author.

¹⁵⁸ INTERFAX, "Speaker Urges Deputies to Continue Talks on Minority Group," (26 May 1993), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC93-000077404, 26 May 1993o.

issue with a parliamentary solution based on dialogue and compromise.¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately, Lucinschi had limited legislative tools by which to shelter the legislation from attack. Without a ‘closed rule’ or ‘package vote’, the political leadership was too weak to protect a controversial bill like Gagauz autonomy.

The weakness of the political leadership was evident again when parliament reconvened in June. Instead of using restrictive rules to protect the compromise, just the opposite occurred. An item-by-item discussion of the bill generated “unproductive debate” and demonstrated what one observer called “the astonishing inability of the legislature to adopt acutely needed legislative instruments.”¹⁶⁰ The lack of these ‘legislative instruments’ like restrictive rules or means to discipline party members allowed the veto players and uncommitted committee chairman to frustrate Moldova’s top political leaders.¹⁶¹ In recognition of their defeat, the parliamentary leadership pushed through a resolution to send two alternative bills on Gagauz autonomy to the Council of Europe for their evaluation.

The Council of Europe evaluated the draft bills and returned them to the parliament at the end of July.¹⁶² From Cotorobai’s reading of the report, the special Council of Europe evaluation recommended that territorial autonomy *not* be granted for the Gagauz.¹⁶³ Cotorobai announced that the Council of Europe’s report recommended against preferential treatment for national minorities.¹⁶⁴ The Council of Europe report’s recommendations were open to debate; however, portions of the report provided fodder for the opposition’s campaign against the autonomy bill. The report stated that the draft bill on autonomy had “elements of federalism;” that ethnic minorities did not have the right to autonomy or self-

¹⁵⁹ BASAPRESS, "Lucinschi Rules out Territorial Autonomy for Gagauz," (1 June 1993), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC93-000080422, 2 June 1993l.

¹⁶⁰ FBIS, "Parliament Handling of Separatism Assailed."

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Patrick Mooney et al., *Rapport D'expertise Relative a La Situation Des Gagaouzes En Republique De Moldova*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 28 July 1993.

¹⁶³ BASAPRESS, "European Council Opposes Federalization on Ethnic Bases," (31 July 1993), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC93-000116018, 3 August 1993g.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

determination; and it openly questioned what protection was available for the non-Gagauz population in the autonomous region.¹⁶⁵ Cotorobai, demonstrating his weak commitment to the compromise draft law, agreed to scrap it in favour of a comprehensive law protecting minority rights similar to Arseni's earlier draft legislation.¹⁶⁶ While the minority rights law may have been needed, it did little to solve the Gagauz question and answer their demands for autonomy. As a result the compromise agreement was dead.

The defeat was a blow to Snegur. It highlighted the inability of President Snegur to produce policy change. He lacked sufficient influence to push the compromise through the parliament. The president's office, represented by Viktor Grebeshnikov, placed the blame for the stalemate squarely on the "ignorance" of the parliament's deputies, who should have acted to resolve the issue.¹⁶⁷ He called the deadlock a missed opportunity as the compromise had been an "ideal chance" to solve the Gagauz question. "One thing is left—the deputies must be imbued with responsibility for the future of our country and grant the Gagauz a special status."¹⁶⁸ Snegur, still unwilling to use a presidential decree, was dependent upon parliamentary approval in order to create an autonomous region for the Gagauz.

The impotence of the leadership on the Gagauz issue had important consequences. One consequence was Transnistria and the Russian 14th army. From the Russian perspective, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria was dependent on the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. The talks between Moldova and Transnistrian officials had reached an impasse and there was little hope for resolution due to the stalemate over autonomy for the Gagauz. Russian media linked the Transnistrian and Gagauz problems by noting that the Moldovan parliament had demonstrated its clear unwillingness and inability to resolve the

¹⁶⁵ Mooney et al., *Rapport D'expertise Relative a La Situation Des Gagaouzes En Republique De Moldova*.

¹⁶⁶ BASAPRESS, "European Council Opposes Federalization on Ethnic Bases."

¹⁶⁷ INTERFAX, "Presidential Aide Warns of Prolonged Gagauz Dispute," (4 June 1993), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC93-000081531, 4 June 1993j.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

“easier” Gagauz question.¹⁶⁹ The stalemate had prevented Moldova from making any progress on either of the difficult territorial disputes facing the tiny country. Another consequence of the stalemate was the immediate call for parliament to disband due to its failure to pass the negotiated compromise.¹⁷⁰ Lucinschi’s leadership was questioned in the local media due to his lack of agenda control as chairman.¹⁷¹ In an interview held just after the deadlock, Lucinschi admitted that he was unable to secure the support of a sufficiently strong majority of deputies in order to defeat the opposition.¹⁷² He believed that calling early elections was the best way to end the stalemate.

BREAKING THE DEADLOCK

In August 1993 a special session of Moldova’s parliament was convened in an attempt to deal with the economic and political problems facing the republic. The leaders hoped deputies would compromise and break the deadlock which had marred the previous regular session. In order for Moldova to expand its economic markets, Snegur requested parliament’s approval of Moldova’s membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). He specifically needed parliament to ratify his signature on the CIS membership agreement. In the same speech, Snegur blamed certain political actors in parliament for “frustrating” initiatives to find a solution to the Gagauz question.¹⁷³ He asked for deputies to take a “responsible attitude” and adopt the original draft law produced by the Cotorobai Commission.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ FBIS, "Withdrawal 'Stumbling Block' at Moldova Talks," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, (7 July 1993), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-129, 8 July 1993s.

¹⁷⁰ BASAPRESS, "Deputy Andronic Calls for New Elections," (16 July 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-136, 19 July 1993c.

¹⁷¹ FBIS, "Parliament Handling of Separatism Assailed."

¹⁷² FBIS, "Lucinschi on Gagauz, Dniester Problems," *Novoye Vremya*, (15 June 1993), translated in FBIS JPRS Report, FBIS-USR-93-087, 12 July 1993i.

¹⁷³ Mircea Snegur, "Nezavisimost' I Suvernitet Nuzhdaiutsia V Konkretnykh Programmakh," *Nezavisimaya Moldova*, 7 August 1993.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

Parliament did not heed Snegur's advice. The CIS membership measure fell short of approval by four votes as Agrarian party leaders were unable to exert sufficient influence on rank and file members.¹⁷⁵ After the rejection of CIS membership, the Agrarian party leaders decided to act. Together with their allies, the Agrarian deputies walked out of parliament forcing Lucinschi to close down the parliament due to a lack of a quorum.¹⁷⁶ Lucinschi, the majority bloc and Snegur all called for parliament to revise the electoral law for new elections and then dissolve itself.¹⁷⁷ To facilitate this, Lucinschi held another extraordinary session to discuss a draft electoral law and fix a date for elections. In addition to the debate over electoral law, the constitution, and the CIS membership, the parliament's leadership issued a decree stating that the parliament should hold a special session to try to address the Gagauz issue.¹⁷⁸

The parliament convened another extraordinary session on 14 September with an agenda full of unresolved items from the previous session.¹⁷⁹ Again, the majority bloc walked out of parliament with the condition that they would only return if parliament was ready to adopt a new election law, fix a date for early elections, and then dissolve itself.¹⁸⁰ The majority bloc led by the Agrarians held together and staged additional boycotts on 25, 28, and 29 September. This caused Lucinschi to adjourn parliament until 6 October as only the opposition factions gathered in the conference hall.¹⁸¹ The majority bloc prevented a

¹⁷⁵ FBIS, "Parliamentary Crisis in Moldova," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, (7 September 1993), translated in FBIS Daily Report, 20 September 1993n; United Press International, "Moldovan Parliament Votes against C.I.S. Membership," (accessed via LexisNexis), 5 August 1993.

¹⁷⁶ INTERFAX, "Moldovan Parliamentary Crisis Deepens on 10th August," (accessed via LexisNexis), reprinted in BBC World Summary of World Broadcasts, 12 August 1993c.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid; INTERFAX, "Moldovan President and Parliament Speaker Support Early Elections," (accessed via LexisNexis), reprinted in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 12 August 1993d.

¹⁷⁸ FBIS, "Decree on Measures to Accelerate Economic Reform," *Nezavisimaya Moldova*, (18 August 1993), translated in FBIS JPRS Report, FBIS-USR-93-131, 12 October 1993d.

¹⁷⁹ FBIS, "Parliament 'Bogged Down' in Debate over Dissolution," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (15 September 1993), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-177, 15 September 1993k.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ INTERFAX, "Parliament Session Postponed until 6th October," (29 September 1993), reprinted in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 2 October 1993g; ITAR-TASS, "Reports of 'Another Parliamentary Crisis' under Way," (28 September 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-187, 29 September 1993d.

quorum but needed the minority factions to change the electoral law. The boycotts eventually forced a meeting between the presidium, majority, and opposition faction leaders where an agreement was reached. Parliament reconvened to pass the new electoral law, set a date for new elections, and dissolve itself.

The breakthrough can be attributed to several factors. One influential factor was the majority's use of the quorum rule. The Agrarian-led majority bloc forced parliament to adjourn, then blamed the deadlock on the opposition and their unwillingness to compromise. Public opinion, already against the Popular Front, supported the Agrarian party in their efforts.¹⁸² The Popular Front agreed to new elections in order to avoid further damage to their public image. Another contributing factor may have been that Snegur threatened to dissolve the new parliament himself.¹⁸³ Additionally, the majority bloc threatened to submit the crucial questions facing the parliament to a national referendum. A popular vote would have been used to decide whether to dissolve the parliament, join the CIS and reassert Moldova's sovereignty by rejecting a possible union with Romania. Parliamentary observers felt the referendum would not allow sufficient time for the Popular Front to sway public opinion. The opposition opted against a referendum and chose the 'lesser evil' which was to hold early elections for a new 104-seat professional parliament.¹⁸⁴

By rewriting the electoral law, the parliament agreed to make institutional changes which Moldova's leaders hoped would drastically improve the ability of the parliament to operate under a party system. Three fundamental changes were made: (1) replacing the 380 electoral districts with one electoral district for the entire country; (2) the implementation of a

¹⁸² ITAR-TASS, "Moldovan Parliament to Resume Session," (accessed via LexisNexis), 28 September 1993b.

¹⁸³ Agence France Presse, "Snegur Thinking About Dissolving Moldovian Parliament [*Sic*]," (accessed via LexisNexis), 28 September 1993. Pușcaș, then a deputy chairman in the parliament, dismissed any comparisons between Snegur and Yeltsin's actions toward the Russian parliament. See INTERFAX, "Parliamentary Crisis: Elections to Take Place in February 1994," (accessed via LexisNexis), reprinted in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 14 October 1993h.

¹⁸⁴ FBIS, "Parties Start Campaigning for 27 Feb Elections," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (21 October 1993), translated in FBIS Document, FC93-000146900, 21 October 1993o. Arseni speculates that Lucinschi wanted to dismiss parliament so the draft constitution could be revised. See Arseni, Personal Interview with Author.

proportional representation system with a minimum four percentage threshold; and (3) the use of a closed list method for voting.¹⁸⁵ With these changes, the new leaders wanted to create an effective majority in order to gain agenda control and ensure favourable legislative outcomes in the new parliament. The impact of these changes is examined in greater detail in Chapter Five.

After parliament voted to hold new elections, Moldova's political leaders reflected openly on why a settlement on Gagauz autonomy had not been passed. Prime Minister Sangheli stated that the government had done all it could do and failure to adopt a compromise on the Gagauz (and Transnistrian) issue was due solely to the parliament.¹⁸⁶ Parliamentary chairman Lucinschi followed suit by blaming deputies of the Popular Front factions who "repeatedly blocked principal decisions, in particular, on Gagauzia's special status and the republic's entering the CIS."¹⁸⁷ These comments by top political leaders reflected a frustration with their overall lack of control over the parliament.

President Snegur met with Gagauz leader Stepan Topal to reiterate that any autonomy statute would need to be passed by the new parliament.¹⁸⁸ Snegur encouraged the Gagauz to participate in upcoming elections in order to influence the outcome. The Gagauz listened to Snegur's overtures but were having difficulty understanding why some form of autonomy could not be implemented. The Gagauz leadership offered an alternative plan: Snegur should issue a presidential decree and establish a special autonomous region himself.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ INTERFAX, "Parliament Approves Election Procedure," (19 October 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-201, 20 October 1993f.

¹⁸⁶ FBIS, "Sangheli: Parliament Fails to Back Chişinău Peace Moves," *Mayak Radio Network*, (23 October 1993), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-205, 26 October 1993q.

¹⁸⁷ INTERFAX, "Luchinskiy Calls for 'Close Contact' with Russia," (3 December 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-232, 6 December 1993b.

¹⁸⁸ INTERFAX, "Snegur Urges Gagauz Leaders to Participate in Vote," (3 November 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-212, 4 November 1993m.

¹⁸⁹ INTERFAX, "Presidential Bulletin: Snegur Interview," (28 December 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-93-248, 29 December 1993l.

Snegur refused to take this dramatic approach and instead of a settlement, the stalemate persisted.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided an institutional explanation of the stalemate between Moldova and the Gagauz from 1991 to 1993. Table 4.2 summarizes the significant events during this period. Moldova's parliament consistently failed to pass a bill which matched the Gagauz expectation of territorial autonomy. Most remarkable was the fact that parliament was unable to secure an agreement even when the top leadership on both sides supported a particular proposal. Certain institutional features contributed to a weak parliamentary majority, strong veto players, and poor party discipline. These institutional problems hampered the leadership's ability to pass legislation on substantive issues which faced the vulnerable republic.

Table 4.2 Chronology of Stalemate on Gagauz Autonomy (1991-1993)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Gagauz Reaction</i>	<i>Moldovan Parliament Reaction</i>	<i>Result</i>
January 1991	Parliament offers 'Gagauz județ' in a decentralized unitary state	-	+	Stalemate
December 1992	Snegur/Sangheli submit draft plan for autonomy to Parliament	+	-	Stalemate
May 1993	Lucinschi submits Cotorobai bill for autonomy to parliament	+	-	Stalemate
May 1993	Cotorobai bill amended—key autonomy provisions removed	-	+	Stalemate
July 1993	Bill submitted to Council of Europe; Minority rights recommended	-	+	Stalemate

This institutional explanation of the stalemate between the Gagauz and Moldova reveals shortcomings in other scholarly work on the Gagauz question. One assertion claims that a popular consensus in Moldova was needed before autonomy could be offered to the

Gagauz.¹⁹⁰ This view concentrates on public opinion and claims that a lack of popular support delayed a settlement until after the 1994 elections.

This assertion fails to appreciate that Moldova's leadership supported a settlement *prior* to the elections. By focusing on the results of the election and not the institutional changes, important lessons from the stalemate are overlooked. Instead of a mandate for change, the elections returned the same parliamentary chairman and majority to power. The change in popular support was minimal and does not explain why the stalemate occurred and how Moldova overcame it.

A second argument focuses on a change of preferences within Moldova's leadership. This view asserts that after the 1992 civil war over Transnistria, the "unformed nature of Moldovan national identity" allowed Moldova's elite "to change its mind" and accept territorial autonomy for the Gagauz.¹⁹¹ The argument is that Moldova's civil war had a "decisive influence on the Gagauz conflict."¹⁹² The need to solve the larger Transnistrian secessionist movement left Moldova's authorities with "little choice" but to grant autonomy for the Gagauz.¹⁹³

This assertion overemphasizes the relationship between Transnistria and Gagauz autonomy. While the disruptive 1992 civil war may have increased the importance of solving the Gagauz issue, it did not "change the minds" of Moldova's leadership regarding the merits of autonomy. Snegur offered a form of territorial autonomy to the Gagauz *prior* to the civil war. If the civil war increased the urgency to resolve the Gagauz question, it only makes the stubborn stalemate more of a mystery. Additionally, Moldova's leaders often emphasized that the two conflicts had entirely different root causes and thus different solutions. In

¹⁹⁰ Crowther, "Ethnic Politics and the Post-Communist Transition in Moldova," 158.

¹⁹¹ Batt, "Federalism Versus Nationalism in Post-Communist State- Building: The Case of Moldova," 46.

¹⁹² Neukirch, "Autonomy and Conflict Transformation: The Gagauz Territorial Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova," 109.

¹⁹³ Chinn and Roper, "Territorial Autonomy in Gagauzia," 96.

Transnistria, Russian-speaking residents had no unique ethnic identification.¹⁹⁴ Transnistria fought to resist Chişinău's control and maintain close ties with Moscow. The Gagauz were satisfied with living within the Republic of Moldova as long as they were granted territorial autonomy.

I show in this chapter that certain institutional features prevented Moldova's political leadership from producing policy outcomes. First, weak parties resulted in a shifting membership and unreliable voting blocs. Second, key parliamentary leaders were in opposition to the parliamentary majority and wielded veto power. Third, a lack of party discipline and parliamentary protective procedures prevented Agrarian party leaders from being able to safeguard legislation on the floor. Without sufficient control over the legislative proceedings, Moldova's top political leadership were unable to settle the Gagauz question and many other crucial issues like the new constitution and membership in the CIS.

Looking at these features the stalemate was an expected outcome.¹⁹⁵ Cox and McCubbins (2001) warn of similar effects resulting from a system with a high number of veto players.¹⁹⁶ As happened in Moldova, this system was unable to make substantive policy changes and major problems went unresolved.¹⁹⁷

To overcome the stalemate, several changes were made to Moldova's electoral law. The effects of those changes are described in Chapter Five. In general, new elections were held with a hope to strengthen the parliament's majority party leaders. With more control over the legislative agenda and improved party discipline, parliament could reach a compromise solution on the Gagauz question and the other crucial issues facing Moldova.

¹⁹⁴ The region constituted 40% Moldovans, 25% Ukrainians, and 23% Russians. As Kolstø (1998) notes, Chişinău insists that the conflict is political, not ethnic, in nature. See Kolstø and Malgrin, "The Transnistrian Republic: A Case of Politicized Regionalism," 103.

¹⁹⁵ Shugart and Haggard, "Institutions and Public Policy in Presidential Systems," 64-65.

¹⁹⁶ Cox and McCubbins, "The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes," 63.

¹⁹⁷ Herbert Döring, "Institutions and Policies: Why We Need Cross-National Analysis," in *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, ed. Herbert Döring (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag; St. Martin's Press, 1995a), 45; Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*, 185-86.

CHAPTER 5: AGENDA CONTROL AND SETTLEMENT: 1994-1995

5.1 Introduction

After the 1994 elections, the Agrarian party gained more control within Moldova's parliament and championed the effort to find a solution agreeable to the Gagauz. On 13 January 1995, the "Law on the special legal status of Gagauzia" was signed by President Snegur and promulgated. On the same day, the deputy parliamentary chairman, Nicolae Andronic, and the chairman of Moldova's special parliamentary commission, Ion Ungureanu, travelled down to Comrat to formalize the Gagauz agreement. The ceremony was full of symbolism. A flag of the Republic of Moldova was raised, the national hymn of Moldova was played, and Ungureanu and Andronic both spoke before a full session of the Gagauz Parliament.¹ Andronic marked the event by stating: "Many of us Moldovans do not like the law. Neither do you, the Gagauz. But we did one thing. We managed to arrange it in a way that will prevent our grandchildren from looking at each other through the sight of a gun."² The separation and stalemate which had marked the previous five years was now replaced by the negotiated settlement between Moldova and the Gagauz.

This chapter examines why Moldova's parliament granted a form of territorial autonomy to the Gagauz. The question is significant as the settlement of the Gagauz issue came after three years of stalemate and without a major change in the Moldovan and Gagauz leadership. Additionally, Moldova continued to be hampered by a severe economic downturn and the disastrous effects of the civil war with Transnistria. As a struggling new state, Moldova appeared to be an unlikely location for a peaceful resolution of ethnic separatism.

To understand what happened I use the same format as in previous chapters. First, I identify the important political actors and their institutional powers. Then, I consider how

¹ Nicolae Andronic, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 21 November 2005; Ungureanu, Personal Interview with Author.

² Burgudji, Personal Interview with Author.

Moldova's institutional changes affected these leaders and their resolution of a settlement.

I argue that institutional changes—new electoral, constitutional and parliamentary rules—enabled Moldova to reach a settlement with the Gagauz. These changes empowered the Agrarian leadership to push the settlement through the parliament.

5.2 A Negotiated Compromise

After the dissolution of the parliament in October 1993, resolving the Gagauz issue became an electoral campaign theme. As such, autonomy for the Gagauz could not be acted on until after the election in February 1994. Topal, Kendigelian, and other Gagauz leaders were unhappy with this turn of events. They pressed President Snegur to act immediately and declare a special status for the region by presidential decree. Snegur refused due to his belief that it was beyond his legal powers as president.³ According to Snegur, presidential authority was limited to resolving financial crises and could not be used to resolve the issue of autonomy for the Gagauz.⁴ Stepan Topal, the Gagauz Republic president, responded by issuing an ultimatum: without a settlement the Gagauz region would not participate in the parliamentary elections.⁵

With the Gagauz boycotting the election and Transnistria declaring their intent not to allow polling stations on its territory, Moldova was in danger of having a significant portion of the population not participating in the first parliamentary election of the newly independent republic. Moldova's leadership refused to give up on Gagauz participation. In a media interview, parliamentary chairman Lucinschi expressed his belief that the first order of business for the new parliament should be the Gagauz and Transnistrian problems.⁶

President Snegur also pledged his support for a special status and promised to urge

³ INTERFAX, "Presidential Bulletin: Snegur Interview."

⁴ Ibid. This view was reiterated during our interview.

⁵ FBIS, "Administrator on Resolving Gagauz Concerns," *Kishinivskiye Novosti*, (18 December 1993), translated in FBIS JPRS Report, FBIS-USR-94-007, 31 January 1994a.

⁶ ITAR-TASS, "Speaker Says Parliament Must Solve Separatism Problem," (16 February 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-032, 16 February 1994e.

parliament to take up the Gagauz issue on the first day.⁷ Prime Minister Sangheli weighed in by meeting personally with Gagauz President Stepan Topal and other Gagauz leaders to discuss how the election would enable Moldova to create an autonomous region.⁸ The importance of Gagauz participation was evident as President Snegur and Prime Minister Sangheli persisted in their attempts to lobby the Gagauz.

In February 1994 Sangheli met personally with Topal in one last attempt to win over Gagauz support.⁹ Besides repeating the promises of action on autonomy, Sangheli pledged to increase Gagauz representation in the parliament. Sangheli committed that there would be several Gagauz names high enough on the Agrarian party list to become deputies.¹⁰ As a result of the Sangheli-Topal meeting, the Gagauz agreed to open polling stations in the region and participated in the election.¹¹ In the end, over eighty-five percent of the registered voters in the Gagauz region went to the polls.¹² The Gagauz had fulfilled their part of the deal. Now it was up to the Agrarians to fulfil their promise of creating a Gagauz autonomous region. The question would be if Moldova's political actors had overcome the institutional weaknesses which had prevented them from solving the problem the year before.

⁷ INTERFAX, "Presidential Bulletin: Snegur Interview."

⁸ Sangheli, Personal Interview with Author.

⁹ ITAR-TASS, "Gagauz Region to Vote in Parliamentary Elections," (16 February 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-032, 16 February 1994a.

¹⁰ Rules dictated that the list be submitted thirty days prior to the election date. How or if Sangheli got around this rule is unknown. Nonetheless, Sangheli remembers promising the Gagauz "five or six" representatives. In the end, at least four, possibly five parliamentary deputies were ethnic Gagauz. Considering the overall population of the Gagauz was 3.5% of the population, their representation was slightly above the expected proportion. See Sangheli, Personal Interview with Author.

¹¹ This compromise caused a heated constitutional debate between the Moldovan Supreme Court and the Central Electoral Commission. The election law stated that polling stations were to be announced thirty days ahead of the elections. When the Gagauz agreed to vote just two weeks before the election, the Central Electoral Commission ruled that the polling stations could not be opened. The Parliament's permanent bureau took the matter before the Supreme Court which ruled in favour of the Gagauz. The opposition parties, led by the Popular Front bloc, accused the Agrarian party leaders of acting unconstitutionally. See FBIS, "The Electoral Fraud Committed in Chişinău," *Cotidianul*, (1 March 1994), translated in FBIS Document, FC94-000027206, 7 March 1994e; ITAR-TASS, "Parliament Elections Marred by 'Gross Irregularities'," (24 February 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, 1994d.

¹² FBIS, "Moldova Does Not Want Unification with Romania," *Izvestiya*, (2 March 1994), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-043, 4 March 1994g.

5.2.1 Political Actors and Agenda Setters

The key political actors from 1994 to 1995 were the president and the parliament. These political actors had clear preferences on how to solve the Gagauz question. President Snegur had pushed for a settlement using a form of territorial autonomy since 1991. He played an integral role in helping Moldova negotiate a compromise agreement. Within the parliament, the Agrarian party had made autonomy for the Gagauz a key campaign issue and turned it into a top priority on the legislative agenda. For both the president and the party leadership, the dilemma was how to overcome the institutional weaknesses which had beset Moldova during the previous parliament. This section discusses these actors who would deal with the Gagauz question and other problems facing Moldova.

PRESIDENT

In 1994, two events affected Moldova's president more than any other. The first event was the electoral success of the Agrarian Party. From 1991 to 1993, Snegur had first-hand experience with problems caused by a weak majority in parliament. After the Agrarians' strong win in the 1994 elections, Snegur welcomed the Agrarian majority and officially joined the party.¹³ Snegur then partnered with the Agrarian majority in parliament to pass policy favourable to his own political and personal agenda. As members of the same party, Snegur and the Agrarian party leadership worked to address the important political issues had not been dealt with during the previous parliament. These included the question of membership in the CIS, the new constitution, and the settlement of the Gagauz question.

The second event to affect Snegur was the adoption of a new constitution. Snegur had been part of the process to adopt a new constitution since June 1990, when the MSSR

¹³ Mazo, "Comparative Constitutional Engineering and Comparative Constitutional Governance in the Republic of Moldova", 19.

Supreme Soviet formed a “Constitutional Commission.”¹⁴ This effort to write a new constitution was in fact headed by Snegur, who at the time was the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. From 1991 to 1993, the draft Constitution was caught in the same parliamentary deadlock which had stalled the draft bill for Gagauz autonomy. Even though the country needed a fundamental document to replace the outdated Soviet-era constitution, Moldova’s political leaders could not win parliament’s approval of a new constitution. Snegur, as well as the Agrarian party, made the passage of the new constitution a goal of the newly elected parliament.

After the 1994 election, the new parliament worked with Snegur to draft a new constitution which would satisfy both the parliament and the president. The baseline document was the 1993 draft which had been considered by the previous parliament. In 1994, two key changes were made which increased parliamentary power. The first required the president to nominate a candidate for the prime minister “on consultation with the parliamentary majority.”¹⁵ A second change gave parliament the right to determine exactly what threshold was necessary to override a presidential veto by removing the supermajority requirement.¹⁶

At the same time, the drafters of the new constitution strengthened presidential powers vis-à-vis the parliament.¹⁷ One change in article 85 of the new draft gave the president more leeway to dissolve parliament. Another change in Article 88 gave the president the right to call a referendum, which previously had only been a right of the

¹⁴ Ibid, 6.

¹⁵ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, *Constitution of the Republic of Moldova* (1994a); available from <http://xiv.parlament.md/>.

¹⁶ See article 84 of the Constitution. Parliamentary rules set the threshold at two-thirds; however, parliamentary rules only require a majority vote to change.

¹⁷ Others have written on the constitution writing process in Moldova and its effects on Presidential powers. See Richard D. Anderson et al., *Postcommunism and the Theory of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Mazo, "Comparative Constitutional Engineering and Comparative Constitutional Governance in the Republic of Moldova"; Way, "Pluralism by Default in Moldova." I agree with Crowther’s assessment that the 1994 constitution “significantly strengthened” the Presidency. See Crowther, "The Politics of Democratization in Postcommunist Moldova," 318.

parliament. Also, a provision in Article 84 guaranteed the president the right to participate in parliamentary sessions. All these changes to the final draft were added to the existing presidential powers outlined in the 1993 draft. These included the right to suspend acts of parliament which the president felt contravened the law until they were ruled on by the Constitutional Court (Article 88); the right to propose legislation (Article 73); and the right to issue presidential decrees (Article 94). The effect of the new 1994 constitution was that it strengthened the powers of the president and made him an agenda setter in his own right.¹⁸

In the premier-presidential regime under which Moldova operated, a good working relationship was essential between the president and the parliament.¹⁹ Without cooperation parliamentary deadlock would have been replaced by government gridlock as the president had sufficient veto power to stymie any decisive policy decisions. Instead of gridlock, President Snegur forged a strong partnership with parliament in order to resolve the Gagauz question. Snegur had been an advocate of autonomy since 1991. The test would be if Snegur could leverage his newly enshrined constitutional powers and Agrarian party membership on behalf of the Gagauz in Moldova's new parliament.

PARLIAMENT

Moldova's 12th parliament, elected in 1990, held its last session on 19 October 1993 after passing sweeping changes to the electoral law and the structure of parliament. The previous deadlocks had made it painfully clear that institutional changes were necessary in order for the parliament to be an effective legislature.

Several changes were made to strengthen Moldova's political parties and increase the control of party leaders. The first change replaced the 380 electoral districts with one

¹⁸ The right to issue a presidential decree is not necessarily agenda-setting power (as it has immediate force) but the threat of decree can prompt action by parliament. In this way, decrees allow presidents to initiate policy change and obtain legislative outcomes that Congress on its own may not have passed. See Shugart and Haggard, "Institutions and Public Policy in Presidential Systems," 73.

¹⁹ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 23-24.

electoral district to encompass the entire country.²⁰ One electoral district had several advantages.²¹ With the single electoral district came the abolition of Moldova's single-member representative districts from the Soviet system. Instead, Moldova adopted proportional representation which gave voters a choice from a list of parties or independent candidates.²² The system was designed to increase deputy loyalty to the party and party leadership. With one electoral district shared by the entire parliament, a deputy was more likely to consider if a particular vote benefited his position in the party and not his "constituency."²³

The new electoral law rewarded parties with broad appeal. Under the law, individual candidates were held to the same four percent threshold as established political parties or blocs. As a result, not one of the twenty individual candidates in the 1994 election came close to winning a sufficient number of votes. The most successful individual candidate received 6,443 votes—over 60,000 votes short of gaining a seat. Similarly, those parties which were narrowly focused or regionally based were not successful. These included groups like the Alliance of Victims of the Totalitarian Regime, the Green Party, and the Alliance of Women of Moldova. Almost twenty percent of the votes were lost on candidates and parties who received less than four percent of the total vote.

²⁰ Technically, this change was made in article two of the implementation decree signed by Lucinschi. See Thomas Carothers et al., *The Moldovan Parliamentary Elections: February 24, 1994*: International Foundation for Electoral Systems, undated 1994.

²¹ A practical reason for the single district was to ensure that the Gagauz and Transnistrian regions did not disrupt the elections by creating gaps in the electoral map. This proved crucial to the election's success as article 56 of the electoral law mandated a minimum threshold of one-third participation for each electoral district. As the actual participation in the Transnistrian region was lower than one-third, the election would have been declared invalid had it been an electoral district. However, with only one electoral district for the entire country, the minimum threshold was met as turnout for the whole country was nearly 80%.

²² Article 30 of the electoral law provided the opportunity for individual candidates to run if they obtained 1,000 signatures.

²³ Mark Hallerberg, "Electoral Laws, Government, and Parliament," in *Patterns of Parliamentary Behavior: Passage of Legislation across Western Europe*, ed. Herbert Döring and Mark Hallerberg (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004).

Another change to strengthen the party was the use of a closed list to select which candidates would become deputies. As stated in article 8 of the electoral law, the parties themselves nominated candidates to be included on the list.²⁴ The party leadership decided which candidates would appear on the list and in what order. While lists of the candidates were available and posted, no party candidate names were on the ballot. The ballot only had the name of the party and the party's symbol. A decision of the Central Election Commission on 22 December 1993 gave parties the right to submit their prioritized list of candidates as late as 30 days before the election. In this way, party leaders could use the campaign to determine the priority of their candidates. The closed list allowed leaders to reward loyal party members with a higher placement on the list.

The effect of these changes was an emphasis on the party over the candidate. The changes made the 1994 parliament a very different legislative body. The remainder of this section examines how these and other changes affected the parliament's political parties, the position of parliamentary chairman, and the role of parliamentary commissions.

Political Parties

After the dissolution of parliament in 1993, the Agrarian party had the most potential to build a strong majority and exert control in the new parliament. In anticipation of their electoral success, Moldova's top political leaders aligned themselves with the Agrarian party.²⁵ Prime Minister Sangheli, who had been supported by the Agrarian bloc of deputies when he was elected in 1992, officially joined the Agrarian party in December 1993.²⁶ Shortly after, parliamentary chairman Lucinschi followed suit and added his name to their

²⁴ Carothers et al., *The Moldovan Parliamentary Elections: February 24, 1994*.

²⁵ Igor Botan, a long time follower of Moldova's political scene, observed that this strategy--political figures picking parties or parties forming around political figures--continued through the 1990s as party identification was slow to take hold in Moldova. See Igor Botan, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 23 November 2005.

²⁶ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, "Moldovan Premier Prepares to Resign as First Step in Taking Part in Elections," *Russia's Radio Moscow*, (accessed via LexisNexis), transcribed and published by BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 22 December 1993c.

candidate list. Just prior to the elections Lucinschi explained his rationale: "The goal of our party is to win the majority in parliament, making it possible to form a steady government which will lead Moldova out of the crisis."²⁷

In addition to the Agrarian party, there were six other political parties which put forward a full slate of candidates.²⁸ In total, thirteen parties or blocs put forward candidates (in addition to twenty independent candidates). The Agrarian Party won a plurality of the votes with 43% of the vote, and an absolute majority of the seats, taking 56 of the 104 seats in parliament. The conservative Socialist Edinstvo bloc won 28 seats with 22% of the vote. Together, the two groups had 84 of the 104 seats in parliament. The splintered Popular Front parties took the other 20 seats: 9 seats to the Popular Christian Democratic Front and 11 for the Peasants and Intellectuals Bloc.

With their majority, the Agrarian party was poised to fulfil the promises it made during the electoral campaign. On most issues during the first year of the new parliament, the Agrarians aligned themselves with the Socialist Edinstvo bloc. This was good news for the Gagauz considering the commitment of both groups to finding a solution on the issue of autonomy.

Parliamentary Chairman

The Agrarian party was also strengthened by being aligned with the parliamentary chairman. As parliamentary chairman, Lucinschi determined the legislative agenda for the parliament in conjunction with the permanent bureau, the replacement for the presidium. The 1994 constitution specified certain constitutional provisions for choosing the position. Article 64 dictated that the chairman be elected by a simple majority but required a two-thirds vote for removal in an effort to protect the office holder against a capricious majority.

²⁷ ITAR-TASS, "News Digest of February 26," (accessed via LexisNexis), 26 February 1994c.

²⁸ There were 104 seats in parliament so each party had the opportunity to submit lists with 104 names and two alternates. Six parties submitted lists with 104 names or more.

Parliamentary Chairman Lucinschi gained additional agenda-setting power when he guided legislation through the floor debate. Parliamentary floor voting procedures were handled largely by the parliamentary chairman. As a rule, complex or confusing voting procedures gave the chairman the advantage as other deputies were kept off balance.²⁹ As noted by one survey, proposals can gain preferential treatment by using certain procedures, such as voting sequence, issue by issue voting, and proposal rights. These procedures impacted the ability of legislation to be adopted.³⁰

Lucinschi directly benefited from the fact that floor voting procedures were not well institutionalized in Moldova. A careful study of stenograms during the parliamentary proceedings of 1994 showed that the parliamentary chairman had wide latitude in his use of parliamentary procedures. Lucinschi determined what versions of an amendment would be considered and in what order the vote would take place. This control increased his powers, especially when only the chairman had a clear sense of the order of events on the parliamentary floor. Lucinschi's views on autonomy for the Gagauz impacted the probability of the autonomy bill's success when he led the floor debate on the individual articles.

Parliamentary Commissions

Moldova's institutional changes also affected the structure of parliamentary commissions which played a key role in drafting the legislation for Gagauz autonomy. The creation of the permanent bureau gave the Agrarian party leaders control over the permanent commissions.³¹ By giving the majority party control over the hiring and firing of commission chairmen and their members, agenda power shifted away from the commissions

²⁹ Rasch (2002) shows that an agenda setter's power is reduced when procedures are easier for the deputies to understand the impact of the vote. See Bjørn Erik Rasch, "Parliamentary Floor Voting Procedures and Agenda Setting in Europe," in *Legislatures: Comparative Perspectives on Representative Assemblies*, ed. Gerhard Loewenberg, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 275.

³⁰ Moser, "The Impact of Legislative Institutions on Public Policy: A Survey," 7.

³¹ A similar process happened in Russia where party leaders gained the power to divide up key posts within the parliament. However, Russia divided posts on a proportional basis as opposed to Moldova's majoritarian allocation. See Chaisty, *Legislative Politics and Economic Power in Russia*, 66.

to the party. This allowed the Agrarians to avoid the problems they faced during the previous parliament when they lacked influence with Cotorobai who served as commission chairman. Political parties exerted power over permanent commissions by controlling commission membership and the leadership.³²

Even though Moldova's commissions were not strong political players, the commissions themselves continued to provide a haven for negotiations of contentious and sensitive topics. The Agrarian party leadership understood that consideration of legislation in a commission before the larger plenary body increased the possibility of finding a solution which could be adopted by majority rule.³³ Deliberations in the commission setting helped to defuse sharply divided feelings on the issue of Gagauz autonomy.³⁴ The first order of business of the new parliament was to create a new joint parliamentary commission to tackle the Gagauz question. Moldova's leaders offered equal representation to the Gagauz side. With the support of Agrarian party leaders, the commission reached a compromise solution with the Gagauz in less than four months. It was then the responsibility of the parliament to take the compromise and turn it into law.

In summary, Snegur and the Agrarian party made the institutional changes to overcome the weaknesses of the previous parliament. With a new constitution, revised electoral law, and changes to parliamentary rules, party leaders had a stronger, more effective parliament. The strength of the new institutional arrangement would be determined by the ability of the majority to control the parliamentary agenda and turn draft proposals into legislative victories.

³² However, Moldova's commissions were not significant sources of legislation. During the first four sessions of the 13th parliament, 78 percent of the legislative drafts were initiated by the government. For an excellent study of Moldova's commissions, see Roper, "The Impact of Moldovan Parliamentary Committee on the Process of Institutionalization."

³³ For a more detailed discussion on the role of committees, see Mattson and Strøm, "Parliamentary Committees," 278.

³⁴ For more on the unique role of committees or commissions, see Döring, "Time as a Scarce Resource: Government Control of the Agenda," 237; Sartori, "Will Democracy Kill Democracy? Decision-Making by Majorities and by Committees."

5.2.2 *Agenda Control and Policy Outcomes*

In this section I examine the effects of institutional changes on the majority's ability to rule, to overcome veto players, and to instil party discipline. The remainder of the chapter explains how Moldova's leaders used their increased strength to produce a favourable policy outcome—the settlement of the Gagauz question.

MAJORITY RULE

The Agrarian party used the principle of the majority's right to rule to strengthen their position within the parliament. They began by replacing the old presidium-style system of the Supreme Soviet with a permanent bureau led by the parliamentary chairman.

Membership in the new body was based on proportional representation of the parties in parliament.³⁵ Given the electoral results, the permanent bureau was dominated by Agrarian and Socialist Edinstvo party leaders. The Agrarians then used the permanent bureau to coordinate and guide the parliament's legislative activities.³⁶

Another empowering feature of the permanent bureau was the ability of party leaders to choose their own members for key legislative positions in the parliament.³⁷ By controlling the permanent bureau, Agrarians populated the leadership with deputies loyal to the Agrarian party. This procedural power ensured individual office holders respected party positions and prevented bills from being considered on the floor which were not supported by the party leaders.

³⁵ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, *Rules of Procedure of the Parliament*, Chişinău, 1994b.

³⁶ Crowther and Roper, "A Comparative Analysis of Institutional Development in the Romanian and Moldovan Legislatures," 150.

³⁷ The effect of party control over key legislative positions was discussed in Chapters Three and Four. For a comparative view, see Cox and McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*; Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*; Jenny and Muller, "Presidents of Parliament: Neutral Chairmen or Assets of the Majority."

Additionally, the Agrarian party gained considerable strength by placing a disproportionate number of its members into permanent commission leadership positions.³⁸ In the new parliament, there were ten permanent committees which commonly had three leadership positions: a chairman, a deputy, and a secretary.³⁹ Of the permanent officer positions in the new parliament, twenty-six or 86% were from the Agrarian party and the remaining five or 14% were from the Socialist Edinstvo Bloc.⁴⁰ Per Roper's (2002) study of the 1994 parliament, the two opposition parties had *no* representation in the permanent commission leadership. This gave Agrarian party leaders additional control of the agenda as commissions reviewed all legislation prior to the draft bills being considered by the entire parliament.⁴¹

By using the principle of majority rule, the Agrarian party gained a greater number of leadership positions than it would have had if the parliament used a proportional distribution. If a true proportional distribution had been used as in many European parliaments, the Agrarian party would have lost nine of their twenty-six leadership positions as shown in Table 5.1. The impact of proportional distribution would have been weaker control for the Agrarians. Instead, the institutional arrangement used made the majority party much stronger.

³⁸ A study of European parliament's found that eleven of the sixteen parliament's with permanent commissions used a proportional system to allocate chairmanships among the parliamentary parties. See Mattson and Ström, "Parliamentary Committees," 279-80.

³⁹ The previous parliament had fifteen permanent commissions. Special commissions were created to handle issues such as corruption, privatization, and the criminal code. See Roper, "The Impact of Moldovan Parliamentary Committee on the Process of Institutionalization," 156.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 160.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Table 5.1 Comparison of Parliamentary Commission Leadership Assignments

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Actual assignments (using majority rule)</i>		<i>Notional assignments (using proportional distribution)</i>	
	<i>Leadership positions (percentage of total)</i>	<i>Chairmanship positions</i>	<i>Leadership positions (percentage of total)</i>	<i>Chairmanship positions</i>
Agrarian	26 (83.9%)	8	17 (54.8%)	5
Socialist-Edinstvo	5 (16.1%)	2	8 (25.8%)	3
Bloc of Peasants and Intellectuals	0	0	3 (9.7%)	1
Christian Democratic Popular Front	0	0	3 (9.7%)	1

VETO PLAYERS

From 1991 to 1993, veto players weakened the parliament's ability to pass legislation like the draft autonomy statute. The majority was not strong enough to overcome the effects of key veto players, which at times included the parliamentary chairman, the commission chairmen and the opposition bloc. As a result, the Agrarian party needed institutional changes to strengthen their position at the expense of the opposition. I evaluate how the allocation of seats in parliament impacted on the number of veto players in regards to autonomy for the Gagauz. The changes in the electoral law were designed to benefit larger parties by minimizing the number of small or regional parties. In this way, changes in the electoral law reduced the number of partisan veto players, which strengthened the majority party.

Figure 5.1 shows the thirteen major parties/blocs and how they were aligned politically. The vertical axis represents how parties viewed Gagauz autonomy and reflects the party platforms in regards to the general inclusiveness of minority nationalities in Moldova. "Anti-Gagauz" political positions were those which defined Moldova as a national state of the Moldovans (or Romanians), mandated the knowledge of the Moldovan

(Romanian) language for official positions, and recognized the Gagauz as colonists or an ethnic minority. These parties included the well known Popular Christian Democratic Front and the Peasants and Intellectuals Bloc. It also included eight smaller parties: Democratic Party of Labour, Green Alliance, Democratic Party, Party of Reform, Association of Women, Republican Party, Association of Victims of Totalitarian Regime, and the National Christian Party.

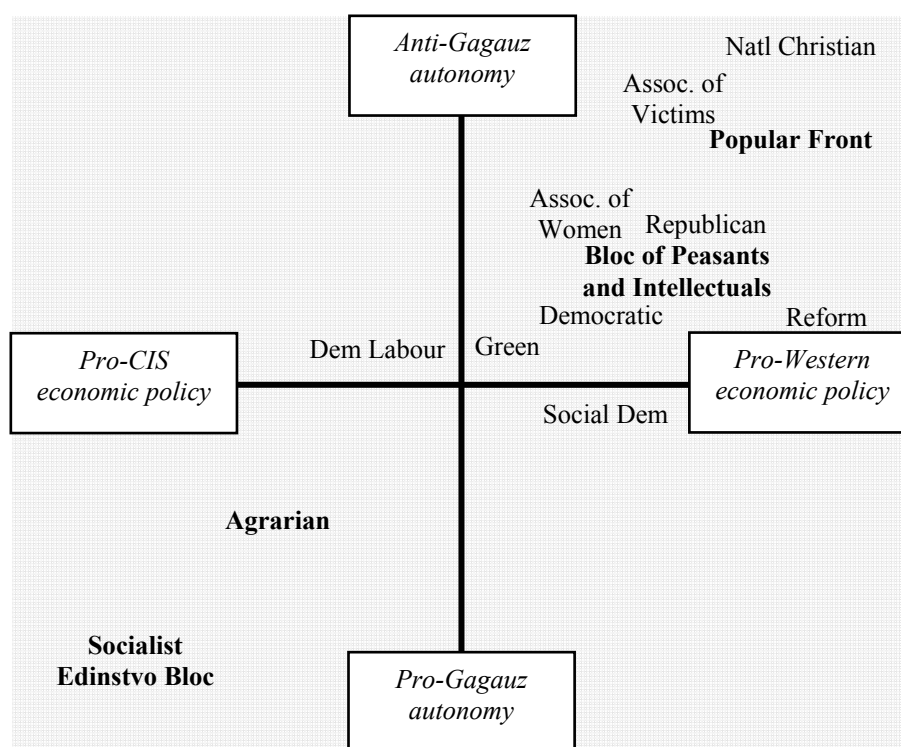


Figure 5.1 Platforms of Moldova's Political Parties Prior to 1994 Parliamentary Elections

“Pro-Gagauz” political positions defined Moldova as a multi-national state, abolished or postponed the necessity to learn Moldovan, and recognized the Gagauz as a separate people or nationality. These included the Agrarian party, the Socialist Edinstvo Bloc, and the Social Democratic party. These parties favoured autonomy for the Gagauz or even a Moldovan Federation, which would include the Gagauz region and Transnistria.

The horizontal axis represents general economic policies, with pro-CIS, Soviet-like socialist policies on one extreme and pro-Western (anti-CIS) policies, which emphasized

privatization and open markets, on the other. Economic policy was one of the primary campaign issues which distinguished political parties and helps to illustrate the political landscape of the election.⁴²

By using these two axes, Figure 5.1 shows two general groupings of political parties. In the top-right quadrant are nine parties who had a pro-Western (anti-CIS) position and were not in favour of solving the Gagauz question by adopting a form of territorial autonomy. This may be a reflection of the pro-Romanian population which felt strongest about preserving Moldova as a national homeland. Two of the four parties who gained deputies in the 1994 parliament were in this grouping—the Popular Front and the Bloc of Peasants and Intellectuals. Together, this pro-Western, anti-Gagauz autonomy group won 20 seats in parliament.⁴³ In the bottom-left quadrant are those parties who favoured close relations with Russia and former CIS countries and supported a form of territorial autonomy for the Gagauz. This group included the Socialist Edinstvo Bloc and the Agrarian party, which were the other two parties that gained deputies in parliament. These parties were generally more ethnically mixed and led by members of the former nomenklatura. Together, the pro-CIS, pro-Gagauz autonomy group won 84 seats.

The vast majority of parties opposed the settlement demanded by the Gagauz. Using Figure 5.1 as a guide, only three of the 13 parties in the election supported the adoption of territorial autonomy for the Gagauz. In fact, without the four-percent threshold the parliament would have had a much larger representation of smaller parties (see Table 5.2).⁴⁴

⁴² The platforms of the political parties were made available to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and described as a “reliable source of information” about the parties’ political orientation. See Carothers et al., *The Moldovan Parliamentary Elections: February 24, 1994*.

⁴³ Of the remainder parties which were against autonomy for the Gagauz, three were led by former parliamentary commission chairmen who had helped defeat previous Gagauz autonomy measures: (1) Victor Pușcaș, leader of the Republic Party; (2) Alexandru Arseni, leader of the Democratic Labour Party; and (3) Mihail Cotorobai, leader of the Reform Party.

⁴⁴ Using a calculation similar to the one used in Romania for their Parliamentary elections, one deputy is equal to 0.96% of the total 104-member body. This number is multiplied by the number of eligible voters (1,703,560) so each deputy represents 16,380 voters. Using a minimum threshold of 16,380 votes, eleven of the thirteen

These opposition parties would have made it more difficult to pass an agreement on Gagauz autonomy, especially if majority party discipline became a factor.

Table 5.2 Actual and Notional Distribution of Deputy Seats

<i>Electoral Contestants</i>	<i>Number of votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Actual seats</i>	<i>Notional seats</i>
Democratic Agrarian Party	766,589	43.18	56	44
Socialist Party and "Unitate-Edinstvo" Movement Bloc	390,584	22.00	28	23
Peasants and Intellectuals Bloc	163,513	9.21	11	10
Alliance of the Popular Christian Democratic Front	133,606	7.53	9	8
Social Democratic Bloc	65,028	3.66		4
Association of Women	50,243	2.83		3
Democratic Party of Labour	49,210	2.77		3
Party of Reform	41,980	2.36		3
Democratic Party	23,368	1.32		2
Association of Victims of Totalitarian Regime	16,672	0.94		2
Republican Party	16,529	0.93		2
Ecological Party "Alianța Verde" (Green Alliance)	7,025	0.40		
National Christian Party	5,878	0.33		
Independent Candidates	45,152	2.54		

Such counterfactual reasoning helps to illustrate how the new institutional arrangements in Moldova minimized the opportunity for the opposition parties to become veto players on the Gagauz question.⁴⁵ Formally, other institutional features allowed veto

parties meet the threshold. I then award each party at least two deputies and allocate the remaining deputies based on the relative weight of the leftover votes.

⁴⁵ I agree with George and Bennett (2005) that counterfactuals play a supporting role and cannot be used alone to substantiate causal variables. See George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 230-32.

players to exist: the parliamentary chairman, prime minister and president could act as veto players by virtue of their constitutional and legal authority. However, this danger was reduced as Chairman Lucinschi, Prime Minister Sangheli, and President Snegur were all Agrarian party members. On the issue of Gagauz autonomy, all three had professed to be in favour of some form of compromise. With this dynamic in the new parliament, the critical factor for solving key issues like the Gagauz question was the cohesion of the Agrarian party and minimizing the number of partisan veto players.

A greater degree of change is possible when governments have strong parliamentary majorities which are not challenged by veto players.⁴⁶ With fewer veto players and more agenda control, the expected action is that such a system will pass legislation which is decisive and substantive.⁴⁷ In Moldova, the stage was set for more decisive and substantive legislation than the previous parliament was able to muster. This was a positive development for the Gagauz. To ensure that Gagauz autonomy became a reality, party leaders were dependent on a disciplined Agrarian party to provide a sufficient number of votes.

PARTY DISCIPLINE

While the Gagauz issue lacked viable opposition party veto players, there were questions regarding the degree of unity within the Agrarian party. During the 1993 debate, Agrarian deputies had broken ranks and failed to support Cotorobai's negotiated compromise. One reason for the rebellion was the ideological distance within the party on the Gagauz issue. The majority of the Agrarian party were ethnic Moldovans, some of whom were opposed to treating the Gagauz as a recognized "people."⁴⁸ In 1993, the party leadership was

⁴⁶ Ellen M. Immergut, *Health Politics: Interests and Institutions in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992a).

⁴⁷ Haggard, McCubbins, and Shugart, "Conclusion: Policy Making in Presidential Systems," 319; Moser, "The Impact of Legislative Institutions on Public Policy: A Survey," 11.

⁴⁸ For polling data on attitudes towards minorities, see Crowther, "The Politics of Democratization in Postcommunist Moldova," 313-17.

unable to maintain party discipline and protect the compromise agreement which had been endorsed by the Gagauz.

In this section I examine how party leaders made institutional changes to improve party discipline. Increased party discipline strengthened the majority party by ensuring the support of rank and file members on contentious legislation. A means to enforce discipline was essential in Moldova's parliament as the Agrarians were not a unified party with deep-seated loyalties.⁴⁹ Party leaders needed tools by which to coerce the support of party members.

In the new 1994 parliament, the Agrarian party leaders passed a parliamentary rule which prohibited deputies from joining other parties after leaving the party from which they had been elected.⁵⁰ The rule also stated that if a deputy left a parliamentary party or was forced out of that party, he or she could not form another party. In the old parliament the majority party (Popular Front) watched their official membership dwindle from a high of 145 seats down to 24 as deputies migrated to other parties or formed new ones. This new rule helped keep deputies in the parties. Leaders would threaten dismissal to coerce deputies to support the party line.⁵¹

New parliamentary rules also gave party leaders the option of "side payments" such as desired commission assignments to induce good behaviour from party members.⁵² Leadership positions were used as rewards by Agrarians to fill the vast majority of positions in parliament. As in other European parliaments, it appeared that ministerial portfolios for party support were handed out to loyal followers.⁵³ Majority party leaders could offer additional resources such as staff and office space in return for support on important

⁴⁹ See Eugene Rusu, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 25 November 2005. Most of Moldova's parties were centered around well-known politicians.

⁵⁰ Roper, "The Impact of Moldovan Parliamentary Committee on the Process of Institutionalization," 159.

⁵¹ Andronic, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵² Cox, "On the Effects of Legislative Rules," 257.

⁵³ Damgaard, "How Parties Control Committee Members."

legislation.⁵⁴ Side payments gave the Agrarian party leaders more leverage to pass significant legislation and produced favourable policy outcomes. One deputy who did not tow the party line related how he was forced to give up his leadership position as a chairman of a permanent commission.⁵⁵ For a particularly controversial measure like the draft bill granting autonomy for the Gagauz, party leaders used these methods to pressure party members for their support. As Cox and McCubbins (1995) note “When party leaders have the means to impose discipline on their backbenchers, agenda control is attained by the extension of the will of the party leadership.”⁵⁶

These institutional changes provided the means for Agrarians to establish majority rule, reduce viable veto players, and increase party discipline. With this newly gained control, party leaders were poised to find a successful settlement with the Gagauz and break the stalemate of the previous three years.

5.2.3 Autonomy for the Gagauz

After the Agrarian victory in the February 1994 election, Agrarian party leaders acted quickly to secure control in the new parliament. The first order of business for the new parliament was to re-elect Lucinschi as the parliamentary chairman and then to re-approve Sangheli as prime minister. The top two Agrarian party officials, Dumitru Moțpan and Nicolae Andronic, were installed as the deputies to the parliamentary chairman.⁵⁷ As described previously, party leaders appointed Agrarian deputies to lead the permanent

⁵⁴ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, *Rules of Procedure of the Parliament*.

⁵⁵ Rusu, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁶ Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*, 19.

⁵⁷ ITAR-TASS, "Moldovan Parliament Speaker on Moldova's CIS Membership," (accessed via LexisNexis), 29 March 1994b.

commissions.⁵⁸ After Snegur officially joined the party, the Agrarian party was now in position to tackle the issues which had paralyzed the previous parliament.

Three days after the parliament was convened, Lucinschi signed a resolution to establish a special parliamentary commission to develop and negotiate a new draft autonomy law with a delegation of Gagauz representatives.⁵⁹ Ion Ungureanu, an Agrarian deputy, was handpicked by the parliamentary leadership to lead the commission. Ungureanu had served on the Cotorobai Commission in the previous parliament. A weakness of that commission was Cotorobai's lack of loyalty to the majority party and his ambivalence on the issue's resolution. A key change in the new parliamentary commission was that Ungureanu and three of the seven commission members were accountable to the Agrarian party leaders for whom a Gagauz settlement was a priority. Another difference was that three of the commission members were Gagauz: Dmitr Chimpoesh, Nikolai Tukan, and Dmitri Uzun (see Table 5.3).⁶⁰

Table 5.3 Composition of Ungureanu Parliamentary Commission

<i>Name</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Gagauz Nationality?</i>
Ion Ungureanu (Chair)	Agrarian	No
Dmitr Chimpoesh	Agrarian	Yes
Nikolai Tukan	Agrarian	Yes
Alexei Gorodinskii	Edinstvo	No
Dmitri Uzun	Edinstvo	Yes
Andrei Juri	Peasants and Intellectuals	No
Petru Poate	Christian Democratic	No

⁵⁸ Roper, "The Impact of Moldovan Parliamentary Committee on the Process of Institutionalization," 160.

⁵⁹ Ungureanu Archives, *Postanovlenie O Podgotovke Proeta Zakona O Pravovom Statuse Naselennykh Puntov S Preimushchestvennym Prozhivaniem Gagauzov*, signed by P. K. Lucinschi, 1 April 1994a.

⁶⁰ See Rusu, Personal Interview with Author.

The Gagauz delegation selected by the Gagauz parliament did not change. Petr Buzadzhi was appointed as the head of the Gagauz delegation, who also led the Gagauz side during the negotiations with the Cotorobai Commission.⁶¹ The Gagauz maintained confidence in their previous representatives as the failure of the previous negotiations was blamed on Cotorobai and the Moldovan parliament.⁶² It was now up to Ungureanu to prove that Moldova would actually deliver on the campaign promises made by the Agrarian party leaders to the Gagauz.

The Ungureanu Commission was the latest iteration of at least five parliamentary commissions which had taken place from 1989-1994. The other four commissions were the Pușcaș Commission (1989), the Joint Parliamentary Commission (1990), the Reconciliation Commission (1990), and the Cotorobai Commission (1993). To create an atmosphere of compromise and trust in his commission, Ungureanu agreed to certain rules proposed by the Gagauz.⁶³ One rule was that each meeting would have detailed minutes to record what was agreed upon. A second was that the chairman of each side of the commission would approve and sign *each* page of the minutes. The third rule was that after a statute was agreed upon, it would not be revisited except with good cause. The Gagauz also asked that the draft autonomy bill would become organic law and require a higher threshold to amend.⁶⁴ Ungureanu accommodated the Gagauz requests in an effort to assuage fears that this

⁶¹ INTERFAX, "Dniester, Gagauz Republics Approve Accord Ratification," (8 April 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-069, 11 April 1994c.

⁶² Buzadzhi, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶³ Ungureanu, Personal Interview with Author. See also Ungureanu Archives, *Pravila: Rapoty Komissii Parlamenta Republiki Moldova I Parlamenta Gagauzskoi Republiki Po Vyrabotke Soglasovannogo Proekta Zakona Republiki Moldova "Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Gagauz Eri -- Gagauzii"*, signed by I. Ungureanu and P. Buzadzhi.

⁶⁴ Ungureanu Archives, *Protokol N.2: Sovmestnogo Zasedaniia Komissii Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova I Parlamenta Gagauzskoi Respubliki Po Vyrabotke Soglasovannogo Proekta Zakona Respubliki Moldova "Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Gagauz Eri -- Gagauzii"*, signed by I.M. Ungureanu and P.I. Buzadzhi, Chișinău, 12 May 1994f.

commission would change important clauses of the draft bill after an agreement had been reached.⁶⁵

While Ungureanu led the Moldovan effort to find a draft settlement, both President Snegur and the Agrarian party leader, Dumitru Moțpan, played important supporting roles to help find a compromise solution. When difficult issues arose with the Gagauz, Ungureanu asked President Snegur to personally intervene in order to settle differences.⁶⁶ The key concerns dealt with defining the extent of autonomy the Gagauz would receive: a separate constitution; the right to appoint judges; and the selection of local government officials.⁶⁷ Snegur's position as president of the Republic of Moldova gave him clout with the Gagauz. Snegur also influenced Moldova's position by working closely with Ungureanu.

While Ungureanu and Snegur settled differences with the Gagauz, Agrarian leader Dumitru Moțpan worked on maintaining unity within the party and parliament. Moțpan urged Ungureanu to find the right balance between Moldova's interests and Gagauz interests.⁶⁸ Moțpan stayed abreast of the committee's work, and at times would publicly warn the Gagauz about becoming too extreme in their request for autonomy.⁶⁹ After the compromise was negotiated Moțpan was responsible for selling the bill to the party. One of the crucial tests of the Agrarians' agenda control would be delivering votes on the parliamentary floor.

⁶⁵ During our interview Ungureanu presented drafts of the autonomy statute showing how each paper was signed by the two chairs of the commission—himself and Buzadzhi. For examples, see Ungureanu Archives, *Pravila: Raporty Komissii Parlamenta Republiki Moldova I Parlamenta Gagauzskoi Republiki Po Vyrabotke Soglasovannogo Proekta Zakona Republiki Moldova "Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Gagauz Eri -- Gagauzii"*; Ungureanu Archives, *Protokol: Sovmestnoi Vstrechi Vysshego Rukovodstva Respubliki Moldova I Gagauzskoi Respubliki S Uchastiem Predsedatelei Parlamentskikh Komissii Respubliki Molodova I Gagauzskoi Respubliki Po Vyrabotke Proekta Zakona Respubliki Moldova "Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Gagauz Eri -- Gagauzii"*, signed by I.M. Ungureanu and P.I. Buzadzhi, Chișinău, 23 May 1994g.

⁶⁶ Ungureanu, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶⁷ FBIS, "Moldova, Gagauz Republic Heading toward Peace Settlement," *ITAR-TASS*, (11 May 1994), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-092, 12 May 1994h.

⁶⁸ Ungureanu, Personal Interview with Author. Moțpan had personally recruited Ungureanu to stand in the election on the Agrarian party list.

⁶⁹ BASAPRESS, "PDAM's Moțpan Holds News Conference," (13 May 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-095, 17 May 1994r.

Ungureanu worked quickly and reached a tentative agreement on the draft bill in the latter half of May 1994. Ungureanu brought together President Snegur and Chairman Lucinschi to work out the final divisive issues with Topal, Kendigelian, and the Gagauz delegation.⁷⁰ Minutes from the meeting provide unique detail on how Snegur offered the Gagauz a series of compromises in order to reach a settlement.⁷¹ It was an example of how the majority's control of the parliament enabled a nexus of effort between the parliament and the president. Four days after the meeting Snegur and Kendigelian signed the draft agreement and less than a week later on 1 June 1994, Ungureanu announced publicly that the draft bill was ready for parliament's consideration.⁷²

Soon after Ungureanu's announcement the parliament of the Gagauz Republic reviewed the measure and endorsed it. They formally requested that Moldova's parliament do the same.⁷³ Less than a week later, the local Gagauz newspaper published the draft autonomy legislation for public consumption with a letter from Kendigelian stating that the Gagauz parliament had approved the law exactly as it was written.⁷⁴ The message was clear that the Gagauz were eager to see the draft law make its way intact through Moldova's parliament.

⁷⁰ The following information is taken from the official minutes of the meeting. See Ungureanu Archives, *Protokol: Covmestnoi Vstrechi Vysshego Rukovodstva Respubliki Moldova I Gagauzskoi Respubliki S Uchastiem Predsedatelei Parlamentskikh Komissii Respubliki Molodova I Gagauzskoi Respubliki Po Vyrabotke Proekta Zakona Respubliki Moldova "Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Gagauz Eri -- Gagauzii"*.

⁷¹ First, the Moldovan side agreed that the draft law could name the city of Comrat as the capital of the newly designated region of Gagauzia or *Gagauz Yeri* (in the end, this clause was changed and capital was chosen by a referendum between the cities of Comrat and Ceadr-Lunga). Next, Snegur addressed the official status for the region and agreed to change it from "state-entity" to an "autonomous-entity." Lastly, the Gagauz repeated their position that they wanted a clause to guarantee the right of self-determination if Moldova ever changed its status as an independent state. Again, the Moldovan side agreed to accept the clause.

⁷² BASAPRESS, "Ungureanu Outlines 'Special Status' for Gagauz Region," (1 June 1994), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC94-000054981, 3 June 1994w; INTERFAX, "Presidential Bulletin," (21 June 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-120, 21 June 1994d.

⁷³ Ungureanu Archives, *Postanovlenie O Rabote Parlamentskoi Komissii Gagauzskoi Respubliki Po Dorabotke Proekta Zakona Respubliki Moldova "Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Gagauz Eri Gagauzii"*, signed by M Kendigelian, Comrat, 9 June 1994c.

⁷⁴ Haberlär, "Respublika Moldova "Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Gagauz Yeri--Gagauzii"," No. 18 1994; Kendigelian, "Postanovlenie Parlamenta Gagauzskoi Respubliki."

On 6 June 1994 copies of Ungureanu's draft bill were sent to the permanent commissions and the legal directorate of Moldova's parliament.⁷⁵ As the Agrarian party and Socialist Edinstvo bloc controlled every commission, party leaders were confident that the draft law would not be hijacked by amendments or stuck in committee. Vladimir Solonari, chairman of the permanent commission for Human Rights and one of the Socialist Edinstvo leaders, came out in support of the draft law and declared that his party would endorse it.⁷⁶ The support was not unexpected given the accommodating nature of the Socialists Edinstvo bloc toward the Gagauz and minority nationalities.

The challenge before Agrarian party leaders was protecting the delicate compromises in the draft bill. The test ensued when amendments were proposed by government officials and parliamentary deputies as part of the normal legislative review process.⁷⁷ The Gagauz then complained vehemently about Moldova's treatment of the negotiated draft law.⁷⁸ Gagauz leaders filed a formal protest which warned that the compromise agreement would be "torpedoed" if the recommended amendments were accepted.⁷⁹

In the complaint submitted to Ungureanu and Moldova's side of the commission, Buzadzhi, the lead Gagauz negotiator, detailed a long list of the Gagauz objections.⁸⁰ These objections included: (1) the removal of the word *narod* (people) to describe the Gagauz; (2)

⁷⁵ BASAPRESS, "Comrat Parliament Discusses Gagauz Juridical Status," (6 June 1993), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-111, 6 June 1994d; Ungureanu Archives, *Postanovlenie O Rabote Parlamentskoi Komissii Gagauzskoi Respubliki Po Dorabotke Proekta Zakona Respubliki Moldova 'Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Gagauz Eri Gagauzii'*.

⁷⁶ BASAPRESS, "Head of Parliament Human Rights Panel Views Bill on Gagauz," (9 June 1994), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC94-000057251, 12 June 1994l. Solonari signed off on his permanent commission's concurrence on the same day. See PARM, *AVIZ La Proiectul De Lege "Despre Statutul Juridic Special Al Gagauz Yeri"*, signed by Vladimir Solonari, Parlamentul Republicii Moldova Comisa pentru Drepturile Omului shi Minoritalile Nationale, 9 June 1994d.

⁷⁷ PARM, *AVIZ Cu Privire La Proiectul Legii Republicii Moldova "Privind Statutul Juridic Special Al Gagauz Ieri -- Gagauziei"*, signed by E. Rusu, Parlamentul Republicii Moldova Comisia Juridica, pentru Numiri shi Imunitati, 27 June 1994c; PARM, *AVIZ La Proiectul Legii Privind Statutul Juridic Special Al Gagauz-Ieri Gagauziei*, signed by M. Petrachi and Boris Negru, Aparatul Parlamentului Republicii Moldova Directsia Juridica, June 1994g.

⁷⁸ INTERFAX, "Presidential Bulletin."

⁷⁹ Ungureanu Archives, *Protest*, signed by P. Buzadzhi, Chişinău, 16 June 1994e.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

replacing the word “parliament” with “highest assembly;” (3) increasing the standard by which Gagauz laws must be compatible with Moldovan laws; (4) changing the term for the highest ranking Gagauz official from *Başkan* (governor) to *glavo* (head); (5) replacing the word for the Gagauz executive from “government” to “department”; (6) changing how Gagauz military units would be placed in subordination to the Moldovan Ministry of Defence; (7) replacing the term “capital” with “administrative centre;” and (8) removing a stipulation that statutes of the autonomy agreement would become part of the Constitution of Moldova.⁸¹

The Gagauz complaints detailed the high degree of care needed to keep the draft bill acceptable. They also illustrated the wide range of issues involved from the organization of security forces to writing of the constitution. Even seemingly small changes to the document such as the selection of particular words would have had a disastrous impact.

Agrarian party leaders like Moțpan, Ungureanu, and Snegur needed to find the right balance between allowing modifications to the law and retaining Gagauz support. Figure 5.2 illustrates the range of Agrarian party and Gagauz preferences on the issue. The horizontal

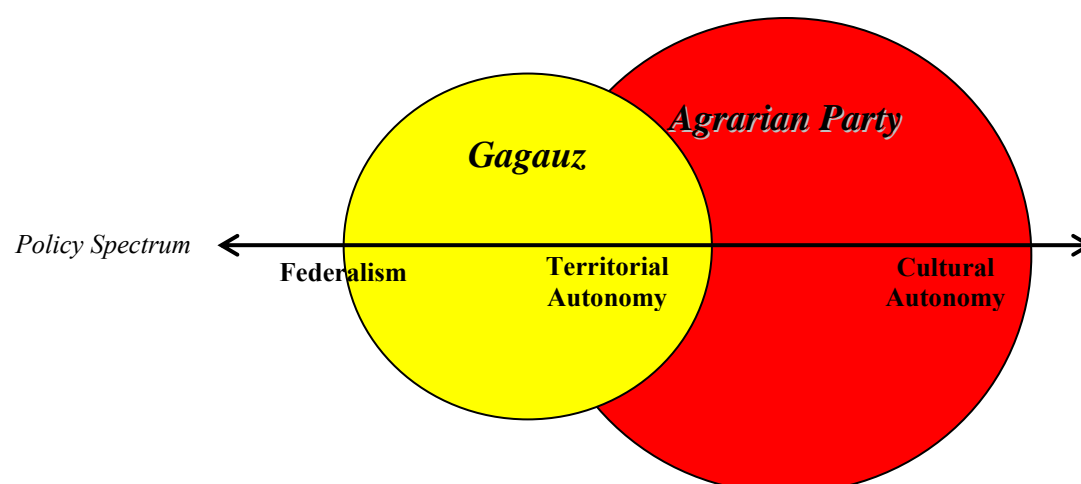


Figure 5.2: Preference Boundaries for Agrarian Party and the Gagauz

⁸¹ Ibid. These eight items are all from the document signed by Buzadzhi.

line represents the policy spectrum on which is listed different variations of protection for minority nationalities. The Gagauz circle shows that the majority of Gagauz were satisfied with a version of territorial autonomy though some would have preferred an even higher level of protection such as federalism. The circle for the Agrarian party shows a greater variation of preferences as the majority favoured a solution somewhere in between territorial autonomy and cultural autonomy.⁸² The negotiated compromise would have to fall in the region where the two circles intersected.

Ungureanu and Snegur acted to maintain the compromise and Gagauz support. Ungureanu met with Buzadzhi, the head of the Gagauz commission while Snegur met with President Topal to convince them that the draft bill being reviewed by the parliament was not substantively different than the draft agreed upon.⁸³ While Gagauz leaders stayed engaged, Snegur urged parliamentary leaders to ensure tight agenda control while the draft was being shepherded through parliament. Snegur reached out to the Socialist Edinstvo bloc, the Agrarian's ally in the parliamentary majority. In response, Valeriu Senic, the Socialist Edinstvo bloc leader and a parliamentary chairman, pledged his party's support of the draft legislation.⁸⁴

THE FIRST READING

The draft bill was at a vulnerable juncture prior to the first reading. The compromise agreement, which had been negotiated in the protected environment of the joint parliamentary commission, was now being challenged on several fronts. Government officials who were opposed to the measure recommended several drastic changes. The Gagauz took note and accused the government of changing the territorial autonomy to cultural autonomy and

⁸² This assessment is based on several factors: polling data, voting records, interviews, and media reports.

⁸³ BASAPRESS, "Parliamentary Commission's Ungureanu Views 'Gagauz Eri'," (29 June 1994), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC94-000062552, 2 July 1994o; INTERFAX, "Presidential Bulletin."

⁸⁴ BASAPRESS, "Gagauz Deputy Speaker Views Meeting on 'Gagauz-Eri' Project," (25 June 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-125, 29 June 1994j.

reneging on promises made by Sangheli and Snegur.⁸⁵ Opposition party leaders who represented groups in and out of parliament attacked the compromise draft, blaming the Agrarian party for making electoral promises to the Gagauz which would lead to disastrous consequences for Moldova.⁸⁶ Alexandru Arseni, leader of the Democratic Party of Labour, warned that passing the legislation would lead to federalization and a new armed conflict.⁸⁷ Other opposition groups warned of the dissolution of the Moldovan state.⁸⁸

The final attack came from the Council of Europe. After a visit by a delegation from the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, a critical report of the law was sent to Moldova's government and parliamentary officials.⁸⁹ One parliamentary permanent commission chairman, Dmitru Diacov, reported publicly that the Council of Europe review had identified several problems with the legislation.⁹⁰ These included (1) the lack of protection for minority rights; (2) the undesirable demarcation of a line between Gagauz territory and Moldova; and (3) the usurpation of authority from Chişinău to resolve migration issues. Moldova's leaders admitted that the Council of Europe had called the bill "excessive" in establishing rights for the Gagauz to administer their own autonomous region.⁹¹

The onslaught of criticism by government officials, opposition party leaders, and the Council of Europe put the compromise bill in jeopardy. However, none of the three groups had legislative veto power. The government officials, the opposition leaders, and the international organization could not prevent the legislation from coming before the parliament as their support was not required for the passage of the bill. The Agrarians'

⁸⁵ BASAPRESS, "Comrat Objects to Chişinău's Plans for Gagauzia," (5 July 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-131, 8 July 1994c.

⁸⁶ BASAPRESS, "Conference Discusses Status of Gagauzia," (5 July 1994), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC94-000063720, 7 July 1994e.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Council of Europe, *Expertise on a Special Status for the Gagauzes in Moldova*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, 2 August 1994.

⁹⁰ BASAPRESS, "Council of Europe Criticizes Draft Bill on Gagauz," (6 July 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-131, 8 July 1994f.

⁹¹ Vladimir Socor, "Moldovan Concessions to Gagauz Deemed Excessive," *RFE/RL Newslines*, 7 July 1994d.

absolute majority in parliament reduced the ability of government ministers to stage a challenge and marginalized the opposition parties. President Snegur explained to the Council of Europe representatives that the problem had to be solved. He later stated, “The Council of Europe was far away but we were here with [the Gagauz].”⁹²

Ungureanu responded to the attacks with the public announcement that *none* of the government’s recommendations, opposition group’s views, or the suggested corrections in the Council of Europe’s report would be incorporated into the draft law which had been submitted to parliament.⁹³ Ungureanu, as commission chairman and part of the majority leadership, understood that it was more important to keep the negotiated compromise alive and reject the recommendations. Watering down the legislation and moving away from territorial autonomy risked losing Gagauz support as had happened the year before. The next hurdle for the draft law was the vote on the parliamentary floor.

Snegur continued his efforts to push the draft bill forward from his position outside of parliament. For example, he invited the president of Turkey, Suleyman Demirel, to make a state visit to Moldova. Demirel accepted and at the beginning of June, the influential leader arrived in Chişinău. It was the first visit by a non-CIS country’s head of state. Demirel and his large entourage discussed Turkish-Moldovan relations, economic ties, and weighed in on the Gagauz issue. Demirel was personally interested in the Gagauz and their Turkic origins.⁹⁴ When given the opportunity to address parliament, Demirel encouraged the deputies to pass legislation which would secure a special status for the Gagauz.⁹⁵ While the opposition in parliament strongly objected to Demirel’s interference in Moldova’s domestic

⁹² See Snegur, Personal Interview with Author.

⁹³ BASAPRESS, "Council of Europe Criticizes Draft Bill on Gagauz Region," (6 July 1994), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC94-000063825, 7 July 1994g.

⁹⁴ Suleyman Demirel, Personal Interview with Author in Ankara, 28 July 2005. A lengthier discussion on Turkey’s connection with the Gagauz is found in Chapter Six.

⁹⁵ BASAPRESS, "Demirel Addresses Chişinău Parliament," (2 June 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-108, 2 June 1994h.

affairs, the real audience of Demirel's speech was the Agrarian backbenchers who were undecided regarding their support for Gagauz autonomy.⁹⁶ Snegur had calculated that Demirel's visit would serve to "lobby" additional support for the draft law.⁹⁷ The visit illustrated how Snegur used his office to influence the parliament's vote on the Gagauz legislation.

Ungureanu plotted when the draft law should be considered by the plenary body. As a permanent commission chairman, Ungureanu met weekly with the permanent bureau, which determined the legislative agenda for the parliament. The Agrarian-controlled permanent bureau decided that parliament would first work through the latest proposed constitution and then consider the autonomy bill.⁹⁸ This was done as the draft constitution contained a special provision (Article 111) which would provide the legal foundation for territorial autonomy in Moldova's centralized state.⁹⁹

Ungureanu himself introduced Article 111 into the constitution to create a special autonomous status for the Gagauz and Transnistrians. On the last day of the constitution's first reading, Article 111 was considered by the parliament. Even with the supermajority of

⁹⁶ BASAPRESS, "Party Criticizes Government 'Antinational' Policies," (7 June 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-111, 7 June 1994p. Snegur's office publicly responded by denying that the draft law had been affected by Demirel's visit. See BASAPRESS, "Official Reiterates Autonomy Plans for Gagauzia," (7 June 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-111, 7 June 1994n. However, Grebeshnikov later admitted that Demirel's visit was aimed to affect the speed of the law's adoption. See Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author.

⁹⁷ This point is made by Snegur's aide, Victor Grebeshnikov, who was responsible for minority affairs. See Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author.

⁹⁸ The delay made the Gagauz leaders nervous. Parliamentary archives show that the Gagauz filed another formal protest with the Moldovan side of the commission. The Gagauz complained that Moldova's leadership (Snegur and Sangheli) had promised that the bill would be considered during the first session of parliament and questioned if several statutes had been altered since the agreement was made. See PARM, *Protest Predsedateliu Komissii Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova Po Vyroboтке Proekta Zakona Respubliki Moldova 'Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Gagauz Eri -- Gagauzii' Gospodinu Ungurianu, I.M.*, signed by P. Buzadzhi, Predsedatel' komissii Parlamenta Gagauzskoi Respubliki, 16 July 1994j.

⁹⁹ On 8 July, the parliament approved the constitution in the first reading, reserving debate on contentious issues like the autonomy provision until later in the month. See Vladimir Socor, "Moldova's Constitutional Debate Enters Final Stage," *RFE/RL Daily Report II*, no. 129 (1994f).

the Agrarian and Socialist Edinstvo bloc, the article stirred up considerable contention.¹⁰⁰ Paragraph one of article 111 read “The places on the left bank of the Nistru river, as well as certain other places in the south of the Republic of Moldova may be granted special forms of autonomy according to special statutory provisions of organic law.” Rusu, an Agrarian deputy and permanent commission chairman, complained that the article’s wording did not define the extent of autonomy for the two regions and left Moldova vulnerable.¹⁰¹ However, the measure passed and even doubtful deputies reluctantly supported it.¹⁰² The two opposition factions walked out but the Agrarian party and the Socialist Edinstvo bloc combined to provide the minimum two-thirds approval necessary to pass the controversial article of the new constitution.¹⁰³ The entire constitution was approved in its second reading on the next day, 27 July.

On 28 July 1994, the draft Gagauz autonomy law was considered by the parliament. Party leaders were aware that rank and file deputies from both the Agrarian party and Socialist Edinstvo bloc had their doubts about several aspects of the draft law. These doubts included: (1) a lack of clear delimitations between Gagauz and Chişinău authority; (2) a lack of guarantees for minority ethnic groups in the region; and (3) a lack of priority on Moldovan law vis-à-vis local Gagauz decrees.¹⁰⁴

Even with these reservations, the draft law was approved in its first reading.¹⁰⁵ Nicolae Andronic, the deputy parliamentary chairman and deputy leader of the Agrarian party, admitted (and other deputies confirmed) that a certain amount of arm-twisting of

¹⁰⁰ BASAPRESS, "The Adoption of the Constitution Did Not Become a Factor of National Conciliation," (1 August 1994), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC94-000070068, 3 August 1994a.

¹⁰¹ Rusu, Personal Interview with Author.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ INTERFAX, "Presidential Bulletin."

¹⁰⁴ BASAPRESS, "The Adoption of the Constitution Did Not Become a Factor of National Conciliation."

¹⁰⁵ Gagauz leaders cautiously hailed the event, stating that the law would lead to a settlement of the conflict as long as the draft was not amended before final passage. See FBIS, "Parliament Gives Special Legal Status to Gagauz Rayons," *ITAR-TASS*, (28 July 1994), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-146, 29 July 1994i.

deputies had been required to pass the law.¹⁰⁶ The ability to ‘arm twist’ came from the changes in the rules (described earlier) which gave party leaders the means to influence party discipline. ‘Arm twisting’ alone was not the only reason why the Agrarian deputies approved the Gagauz law (in the first reading) which they had failed to pass the year the before. There were numerous differences in how the bill was handled in 1994 compared to 1993. These included: (1) Ungureanu’s nurturing of the compromise; (2) the cooperation of the commission chairman and President Snegur; (3) the Agrarian party’s control of the parliamentary commission chairmen; (4) the permanent bureau’s tactical handling of the agenda; and (5) the influence of Agrarian party leaders on the floor vote during the plenary session. These improvements reflected the stronger agenda control wielded by Agrarian party leaders. Their control would be needed again for the second reading of the draft law which was delayed until after parliament returned from the summer adjournment.

THE LONG WAIT

Even though the draft bill passed the first reading, final passage was still not assured. Understanding this, Snegur pushed parliament to finish their work by affirming the importance of solving the Gagauz question in several high visibility speeches. In celebration of the third anniversary of Moldova’s independence, Snegur listed the draft law of Gagauz autonomy as one of Moldova’s three major achievements.¹⁰⁷ In his address to the General Assembly of the United Nations, Snegur noted that a “special form of autonomy” for the Gagauz was being considered by Moldova’s parliament.¹⁰⁸ At a NATO conference in Bulgaria, Snegur again drew attention to the Gagauz legislation.¹⁰⁹ Snegur used these public

¹⁰⁶ Andronic, Personal Interview with Author; Rusu, Personal Interview with Author; Ungureanu, Personal Interview with Author.

¹⁰⁷ INTERFAX, "Presidential Bulletin."

¹⁰⁸ General Assembly of the United Nations, *Address by Mircea Snegur*, Forty-ninth Session, 29 September 1994.

¹⁰⁹ Vladimir Socor, "Moldovan President Urges Western Role in Conflict Resolution," *RFE/RL Daily Report II*, no. 190 (1994e).

forums to express his commitment to settling the Gagauz issue and at the same time to pressure the parliament to act accordingly.

When parliament returned to work in September 1994 after the summer recess, the draft autonomy law was initially delayed for two reasons. First, the parliamentary permanent commissions carefully reviewed the legislation again and offered new amendments.¹¹⁰

Parliamentary archives reveal that Lucinschi had formally directed Ungureanu to work with Rusu, chairman of the Commission on Rights, Appointments, and Immunity to “complete” the draft law by taking into account the additional suggestions of deputies, permanent commissions, parliamentary factions, government ministries, and even the Council of Europe experts.¹¹¹

Before the first reading, Ungureanu had categorically rejected all the amendments in order to preserve the compromise and push the draft bill through the parliament prior to the summer break. In September, Ungureanu dutifully agreed to Lucinschi’s demands and selectively combined the recommendations into twenty-four amendments which would be considered by the plenary session.¹¹² However, Ungureanu adjudicated the amendments to

¹¹⁰ At least five permanent commissions offered amendments to the draft law in October and November 1994. The extent of their amendments varied dramatically. Valeri Senic, a Permanent Commission chairman and party leader of the Socialist Edinstvo bloc, offered two minor changes while another Permanent Commission chairman, Eugene Rusu, prepared six full pages with substantial revisions. For the commissions’ reports, see PARM, *Amendamente Asupra Proiectului Legii Privind Statutul Juridic Special Al Gagauz-Ieri -- Gagauziei*, signed by E. Rusu, Parlamentul Republicii Moldova Comisia Juridica pentru numiri shi Imunitati, 9 November 1994a; PARM, *AVIZ Asupra "Legii Privind Statutul Juridic Special Al Gagauz-Ieri -- Gagauziei"*, signed by Gheorghe Rusu, Parlamentul Republicii Moldova Comisia pentru Buget shi Fianantse, November 1994b; PARM, *AVIZ La Proiectul De Lege "Privind Statutul Juridic Special Al Gagauz-Ieri -- Gagauziei"*, signed by Valeriu Senic, Parlamentul Republicii Moldova Comisia pentru Cultura, Shtiintsa, Invatsamint shi Mijloace de Informare in Masa, 14 November 1994e; PARM, *AVIZ La Proiectul De Lege "Privind Statutul Juridic Special Al Gagauz-Ieri -- Gagauziei"*, signed by Ion Tsurcan, Parlamentul Republicii Moldova Comisia pentru Economie, Industrie, si Privatizare, 24 November 1994f; PARM, *Zakliuchenie Komissii Po Kontroliu I Detitsiam Po Proektu Zakona "Ob Osobom Provovom Statuse Gagauz Eri -- Gagauzii"*, signed by G. Bratunov, Parlamentul Republicii Moldova Comisia pentru Control si Petitii, 5 October 1994v.

¹¹¹ Ungureanu Archives, *Postanovlenie O Proekte Zakona Ob Osobom Pravovom Statuse Gagauz Eri -- Gagauzii*, signed by P. K. Lucinschi, Chişinău, 28 July 1994b.

¹¹² PARM, *Popravka K Proektu Zakona "Ob Osobom Provovom Statuse Gagauz-Eri Gagauzii"*, *Priniatyte Spetsial'noi Parlamentaskoi Komissiei*, signed by I. Ungureanu, 1994i.

ensure they were not objectionable to Agrarian deputies nor would they force the Gagauz to reject the draft law.¹¹³

The second delay was also linked to Lucinschi. Publicly, Lucinschi supported the negotiated compromise. Privately, Lucinschi preferred that the bill be allowed to die by neglect or over-handling. Ungureanu related how Lucinschi told him in one-on-one meetings that the law was a “big mistake” and would “ruin [Ungureanu’s] career.”¹¹⁴ Lucinschi urged Ungureanu on several occasions not to act on the bill before parliament’s winter break which was then scheduled for 20 December 1994.

The significance of Lucinschi’s opposition was his institutional powers as parliamentary chairman. As chairman, Lucinschi ran the permanent bureau, guided legislation through the floor debate, and controlled voting procedures. His opposition made him a potent veto player with the opportunity to derail the entire settlement. Using his position, Lucinschi kept the draft law off the legislative agenda. When Ungureanu finished adjudicating the proposed amendments, Lucinschi told him that the law was not ready. Ungureanu responded that President Snegur wanted the law to be adopted. Lucinschi retorted, “Forget about Snegur. You are in the parliament. You don’t work in the office of the president.”¹¹⁵ Lucinschi knew that the debate on the state budget would be taken up in December and fill the parliamentary schedule. By keeping the autonomy bill off the agenda, it would be pushed aside or at least delayed until the spring.

¹¹³ The Gagauz leaders played up the consequences of losing the compromise by keeping alive the image of being a separatist region. A series of events were used to keep attention on the Gagauz issue and remind Moldova that the Gagauz region was not controlled by Chişinău. The Gagauz celebrated the fourth anniversary of the creation of the Gagauz republic and invited delegations from Transnistria and Cyprus to participate. Gagauz leaders then signed bilateral agreements with other separatist regions like South Ossetia and Abkhazia and announced negotiations with Tatarstan, Crimea, and Nagorno-Karabakh. Gagauz leaders also talked about setting up a “Union of Unrecognized Independent States” in an effort to keep pressure on Moldova’s parliament. See BASAPRESS, “Comrat Marks Fourth Anniversary of Gagauz Republic,” (19 August 1994), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC94-000074948, 24 August 1994b; BASAPRESS, “Gagauzia, South Ossetia Sign Treaty,” (28 October 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-211, 1 November 1994k.

¹¹⁴ Ungureanu, Personal Interview with Author.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

At the eleventh hour, the most powerful agenda setter in parliament had become a veto player.¹¹⁶ Why did Lucinschi want the compromise agreement to fail? I offer three possible explanations. First, Lucinschi may have wanted to extract further concessions from the Gagauz on the degree of autonomy that would be granted. However, Lucinschi's back door actions to stall the legislation cast doubt on his desire to see it passed in any form. A second reason may have been that Lucinschi genuinely thought the legislation was bad for Moldova and wanted to defeat it. This explanation is unlikely given Lucinschi's public actions of the past two years and his involvement in the creation of the Ungureanu special parliamentary commission with the unusually heavy Gagauz membership. The most likely reason was that Lucinschi found political value in preventing the passage of the law. When the new constitution was passed in July, it codified the office of the Presidency and set the next election in 1996. Ungureanu and Grebeshnikov, who watched Lucinschi's jockeying on the Gagauz issue, speculated that Lucinschi was looking ahead and plotting his presidential campaign.¹¹⁷ By preventing the passage of the Gagauz legislation, Lucinschi may have wanted to avoid giving his opponent, Snegur, a major legislative victory.¹¹⁸

Whatever the cause, the institutional powers of Lucinschi's position allowed him to become a veto player even with the strong Agrarian majority. As chairman, he kept the draft bill off the legislative agenda and with the winter holiday scheduled for 20 December, the bill's chances of survival were declining with each day. The Agrarian party leaders needed to act to break Lucinschi's grip on the bill.

¹¹⁶ In four separate interviews, Lucinschi's opposition to the draft law was confirmed. This included the Gagauz leadership (Topal and Buzadzhi), Snegur's Presidential advisor (Grebeshnikov), and the law's drafter (Ungureanu).

¹¹⁷ Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author; Ungureanu, Personal Interview with Author. This assessment is influenced by the fact that Lucinschi did in fact run for president against Snegur in 1996. There was speculation regarding Lucinschi's ambition for the presidency as early as 1993.

¹¹⁸ Gagauz leaders were not as diplomatic. Kendigelian observed that "[Lucinschi] was a very cunning politician, always trying to sit on two chairs and never keeping his word." Topal called Lucinschi a "cunning fox." See Kendigelian, Personal Interview with Author; Topal, Personal Interview with Author.

Snegur was made aware of Lucinschi's roadblock and immediately set about to strengthen the Agrarian party's resolve.¹¹⁹ During the summer of 1994, a fundamental institutional change occurred when the new constitution had come into force. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the new constitution effectively strengthened the office of the Presidency. It included powers which made the president an agenda setter and veto player. For example, he had the right to propose legislation and also the right to veto legislation. For legislation already being considered, the president could pressure parliamentary deputies by threatening to dissolve parliament, issuing presidential decrees, or using his right to call a referendum.

In this manner, Snegur used his position to influence the parliament to act on the Gagauz draft bill. Snegur asked Grebeshnikov, his advisor for minority affairs, to prepare a letter which would direct the deputies in parliament to consider the Gagauz law. Grebeshnikov's initial draft was sent back for a rewrite as Snegur deemed it "too soft."¹²⁰ After Grebeshnikov revised it, Snegur himself added "tougher terms" to make the language stronger.¹²¹ Snegur then met personally with Lucinschi, delivered the letter, and requested that a copy be given to each deputy.¹²² Lucinschi dutifully complied.¹²³ The next day, Snegur announced his actions and publicized that he had urged parliament to approve the draft Gagauz law "as soon as possible."¹²⁴

Snegur's letter had three main points.¹²⁵ The first was there had been sufficient time to examine the law since the first reading in July. The moment had come "to proceed with

¹¹⁹ Snegur met regularly with Ungureanu for updates on the progress of the draft autonomy bill.

¹²⁰ Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid. For the text of the letter, see PARM, *Parlamentul Republicii Moldova: Domnilor Deputatsi! [Letter to Deputies]*, signed by Mircea Snegur, Presedintele Republicii Moldova, 30 November 1994h.

¹²³ Ungureanu Archives, *Presedintele Parlamentului Republicii Moldova [Memo]*, signed by P. K. Lucinschi, 30 November 1994d.

¹²⁴ INTERFAX, "Presidential Bulletin."

¹²⁵ PARM, *Parlamentul Republicii Moldova: Domnilor Deputatsi! [Letter to Deputies]*. The following quotes are from the text of the letter.

the examination of the draft law in the second reading and finally adopt it.” The second point outlined the benefits of adopting the law, including how it would “confirm through law the sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova” and the “integrity of the country.” The final point was that a lack of action on the draft law would damage the parliament. If the adoption of the law was delayed, it would “undermine the authority of the parliament” and could provoke a “crisis of big proportions in the Gagauz region.”¹²⁶

Snegur’s presidential pressure had the desired effect. Ungureanu related how the letter “awoke a lot of deputies” with its tough language and threats to the parliament.¹²⁷ As another deputy revealed, the letter had an impact simply because Snegur was the president and had responsibility for the situation in the whole country.¹²⁸ Responding to Snegur’s letter, the deputies from the Agrarian party on the permanent bureau worked with Ungureanu to bypass Lucinschi’s opposition and introduce the draft bill onto the parliamentary agenda at the next session of the permanent bureau.¹²⁹ At this critical juncture the Agrarian party leaders were strong enough to overrule Lucinschi’s efforts to keep the measure off the agenda.

With new resolve, the Agrarian party leadership pushed the draft law forward. Snegur’s letter had motivated the party leaders to take ownership of the measure and work for its success. Andronic, a deputy chairman in the parliament and deputy leader of the Agrarian party, publicly promoted the examination of the draft law by parliament as a fulfilment of a campaign promise by the ruling Agrarian party.¹³⁰ The Agrarian party chairman, Dumitru Moțpan, also boasted of the law’s accommodating nature and invited a delegation of

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ungureanu, Personal Interview with Author.

¹²⁸ Rusu, Personal Interview with Author.

¹²⁹ Ungureanu, Personal Interview with Author.

¹³⁰ BASAPRESS, “PDAM Wants Referendum on Gagauz Issue,” (10 December 1994), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC94-000111299, 13 December 1994q.

Hungarians from Romania to Chişinău to learn how Moldova was dealing with minority nationalities in a “European” manner.¹³¹

While Snegur scored a victory by getting the bill on the agenda, the legislative war was not over. Without protective parliamentary procedures, party leaders needed to exert sufficient party discipline. In late December, the draft Gagauz law was presented to the parliament for its second reading. Snegur would have to rely on his allies in the parliament to shepherd the measure through the floor debate while Lucinschi and other deputies attacked it with objectionable changes and amendments. In preparation, Ungureanu brought together Moldovan and Gagauz leaders to discuss the draft law and confirm Gagauz support.¹³² The bill needed to be palatable to both the Gagauz and the Agrarian party in order to keep the compromise alive.

THE DEBATE

On the afternoon of 22 December 1994, Lucinschi announced that the second reading would begin for the draft law on Gagauz autonomy. A detailed review of the floor debate revealed how political leaders pushed the draft measure through its final legislative hurdle. The two-day debate provided a microcosm of the entire year: party leaders asserting majority rule, veto players emerging and being defeated; and in the end, party discipline delivering the desired policy outcome. Each area is considered here.

Majority rule

As chairman of the parliamentary commission, Ungureanu had the responsibility of introducing the measure, announcing what amendments had been accepted, and navigating parliament through the changes. It was also up to Ungureanu to consider the amendments in

¹³¹ BASAPRESS, "Snegur, Udmr's Marko Discuss Minority Rights," (14 December 1994), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC94-000112209, 15 December 1994u.

¹³² PARM, *Spisok Lits, Priglashennykh Na Zasedanie Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova 22 Dekabria 1994 Goda Na Obsuzhdenie Zakonoproekta O "Gagauz Eri -- Gagauzii"*, signed by I. Ungureanu, Predsedatel' komissii, 1994k.

such a way to avoid upsetting the Gagauz leadership while still keeping the support of the parliamentary majority.

Deputies from the Socialist Edinstvo bloc allied themselves with Ungureanu and the Gagauz to argue against drastic changes which might disrupt the compromise. During the debate, Valeriu Senic, the leader of the Socialist Edinstvo bloc, cautioned deputies, “I am asking you to be very attentive as we must not hurry. We must search for compromise formulations.”¹³³ When amendments were being considered, Senic played the role of diplomat and met personally with the Gagauz leadership to learn what wording would be acceptable. Ungureanu had arranged to have the Gagauz leaders in attendance to observe the floor debate. This was both an advantage and a disadvantage. Due to their attendance, Ungureanu and Senic received immediate feedback on whether a particular amendment was acceptable. It prevented a surprise rejection of the draft legislation after the Moldovan parliament had finished their work.

The disadvantage of Gagauz attendance was that the Gagauz leaders witnessed the callous treatment of the draft law by some Moldovan deputies. This caused extreme frustration and generally exacerbated tensions. At several points during the debate, Buzadzhi, the chairman of the Gagauz side on the Committee, asked the deputies to reject the proposed changes and simply accept the committee’s work. Otherwise, he warned that the commission’s work would be like a “still born.”¹³⁴

Ungureanu and Senic worked to avoid such a tragedy and argued against changes proposed by other deputies. For example, the right of self-determination was one of the most contentious issues for the Gagauz and the Moldovans. A representative of the Gagauz had earlier declared that deputies should vote to keep it in order to avoid losing the compromise.

¹³³ PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (16.10-16.30)*, Chişinău, 22 December 1994s.

¹³⁴ PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (15.45-16.15)*, Chişinău, 22 December 1994r.

Lucinschi called the clause “nonsense” and asked the deputies to let the Gagauz know Moldova’s opinion on the issue.¹³⁵ Before the vote, Ungureanu intervened by arguing forcefully in favour of passing the original draft. The amendment to delete the clause was defeated and the compromise held.

In this instance and others, Ungureanu and Senic exerted the majority’s control of the parliament. Ungureanu’s position as the head of the parliamentary commission gave him an important role in influencing the debate and content of the amendments. Senic’s position as a party leader and mediator also helped keep the compromise alive and counter the efforts of those who wanted to see the measure fail.

Veto players

The parliamentary opposition parties, the Christian Democratic Popular Front and the Bloc of Peasants and Intellectuals, did not want the draft law on Gagauz autonomy to pass. There was little hope of finding middle ground as considerable ideological distance separated these parties from the negotiated compromise reached by the Ungureanu Commission. After the bill was introduced for its second reading, Valentin Dolganiuc of the Popular Christian Democratic Front proposed to scrap the compromise and consider a draft law on ethnic minorities instead. He was followed by Mr. Matei of the Bloc of Peasants and Intellectuals. Matei supported Dolganiuc’s viewpoint and added that the Bloc would walk out of the parliament if the Gagauz autonomy draft was debated. Matei declared that the parties in the majority “will have the entire responsibility” of passing the law.¹³⁶ The motion to drop discussion of the bill only carried 16 votes. They walked out of the proceedings leaving Lucinschi and the Agrarian rank and file deputies as the only viable hurdles to the bill’s passage.

¹³⁵ PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (11:40-13.05)*, Chişinău, 23 December 1994n.

¹³⁶ PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (13.25-15.20)*, Chişinău, 22 December 1994o.

As parliamentary chairman, Lucinschi controlled the floor procedures and voting order during the full two days the draft law was before the parliament. As noted during the discussion on the parliamentary chairman, this gave the chairman unique power. Lucinschi could and did unilaterally cancel votes on an amendment if he felt a better amendment would be proposed. He used confusing procedures to keep other deputies off balance. As parliamentary procedures were not well institutionalized, Lucinschi had greater latitude to act.

With this power, Lucinschi and another Agrarian deputy and permanent commission chairman, Eugene Rusu, led the charge to amend the draft autonomy law during the course of the debate.¹³⁷ They recognized that serious changes could cause irreparable harm to the compromise which had been carefully negotiated with the Gagauz.¹³⁸ A limiting factor on Lucinschi's ability to act as a veto player was his position as a leader in the Agrarian party. As a key member of the party, Lucinschi was bound to stay within the broad preference spectrum of the Agrarians. He could not explicitly defeat the draft bill without casting doubt on his loyalty to the party. After all, it was the Agrarian party which had made the campaign promise to solve the Gagauz question. This forced Lucinschi to manoeuvre carefully within the Agrarian party while working to water down the draft law beyond the acceptable boundaries of the Gagauz.

Lucinschi and Rusu employed several techniques to break the compromise. One technique was the use of confusing parliamentary procedures. When Lucinschi and Rusu proposed changing the name of the autonomous region, several amendments were being discussed concurrently. Lucinschi stopped the debate and then abruptly brought an amendment before the body for a vote. Immediately, a deputy came to the rostrum and

¹³⁷ Rusu, Personal Interview with Author. Rusu was chairman of the judicial commission and later explained his actions by saying that while Ungureanu was the defender of the draft bill, he was the defender of the constitution.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

complained, “We are confused, what are we voting for now?”¹³⁹ Another deputy objected to being forced to “hurry up” and asked Lucinschi to consider carefully the specific words in the draft law.¹⁴⁰ This ‘hurry up and vote’ technique was used several times during the debate, leaving deputies unsure as to what was being considered and what changes were being made.¹⁴¹

One exchange between Lucinschi and another deputy showed the degree to which other deputies were disturbed by the particular procedures Lucinschi employed. The deputy described the inconsistencies in Lucinschi’s handling of the floor debate on the autonomy bill when compared to a recent bill on the state budget. The deputy noted:

I would like to speak about the procedures. One observation is that not long ago, we voted on the budget. [During the debate on the budget bill], if the amendment was not approved, the content formulated by the commission would remain. At that time the procedure was accurate. Now we begin to mix everything up. Why do we address one law in a certain way and another law in a different way? I don't understand. That is why I think that the draft voted on during the first reading should remain.¹⁴²

Confusion and complexity made it harder for deputies to ascertain the implications of particular voting orders and the impact of amendments on the original draft.¹⁴³ Lucinschi used the confusion to change the original draft bill. Successful changes included: (1) the demotion of the regional governor (*Başkan*) from a vice prime-minister to a member of government; (2) the deletion of a provision for the Gagauz region to license and control the export of goods; and (3) the deletion of a quota for Gagauz representation in Moldova’s

¹³⁹ PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (16.10-16.30)*.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ The atmosphere was such that when a deputy was granted the floor, he apologized for making remarks as it was evident that “we are in a hurry.” See PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (10:00-10.25)*, Chişinău, 23 December 1994l.

¹⁴² The deputy was Semion Dragan of the Socialist Edinstvo bloc. See PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (17.20-17.45)*, Chişinău, 22 December 1994u.

¹⁴³ Rasch, “Parliamentary Floor Voting Procedures and Agenda Setting in Europe,” 275.

government and state agencies.¹⁴⁴ The effectiveness of Lucinschi's tactics was illustrated by the following excerpt from the floor debate. After a vote a deputy came to the rostrum and complained, "We are not clear what you mean, what [the amendment] is all about and if we have even voted on it."¹⁴⁵

Another technique used by Lucinschi and Rusu was to propose amendments from the rostrum during the middle of the debate and then vote on them. As the leader of the Socialist Edinstvo bloc, Valeri Senic, noted these 'on the run' amendments were unadvisable for two reasons: (1) a written copy had not been provided to the deputies; and (2) they had not been negotiated with the Gagauz.¹⁴⁶ However, Lucinschi not only considered the 'on the run' amendments, but he put them before the parliament for a vote before the Gagauz leadership had been consulted.

Lucinschi was present in the meetings where Snegur had negotiated agreements on the most contentious issues. In the debate, Lucinschi, with Rusu's help, set about to break those agreements. They used 'on the run' amendments to strike the use of the word "people" to describe the Gagauz, to remove the declared right of the Gagauz to self-determination, and to change the name of the autonomous area to an administrative unit.¹⁴⁷ Each of these items had been very sensitive issues for the Gagauz.¹⁴⁸

Lucinschi's use of 'on-the-run' and 'hurry-up-and-vote' procedures nearly derailed the compromise. Ungureanu, who was trying to control the amendments, had to stop the debate as he could not follow which paragraphs had been deleted, even after the vote had

¹⁴⁴ PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (11:15-11.40)*, Chişinău, 23 December 1994m.

¹⁴⁵ PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (13:05-13.30)*, Chişinău, 23 December 1994p.

¹⁴⁶ Comments by Valeri Senic. See PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (16.10-16.30)*.

¹⁴⁷ PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (15.20-15.45)*, Chişinău, 22 December 1994q; PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (15.45-16.15)*.

¹⁴⁸ One particular egregious example of these 'on the run' amendments was Rusu's efforts to remove an essential element of the draft law for the Gagauz. The Gagauz had insisted that the draft law include the right to maintain their territory in the event that Moldova joined with Romania or lost its independent status. This measure had been painstakingly negotiated during discussions in which Lucinschi had participated. Even so, Lucinschi did not hesitate in joining the attack, calling the entire clause "nonsense" and "against logic." See PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (16.30-17.20)*, Chişinău, 22 December 1994t.

been taken.¹⁴⁹ The procedures also caused consternation among the Gagauz leaders who watched the modification of key clauses of the draft bill. As Stepan Topal, the president of the Gagauz Republic noted, Lucinschi's actions made the Gagauz leadership seriously consider leaving and starting over "from the very beginning."¹⁵⁰

Had all the amendments been passed, they would have derailed the agreement. However, Lucinschi and Rusu were unsuccessful. The most sensitive amendments were defeated with the help of Ungureanu, Senic, and the discipline of the Agrarian party.

Party Discipline

Moldova's leaders needed a disciplined Agrarian party to ensure the draft autonomy measure passed in a manner agreeable to the Gagauz. Enforcing party discipline was difficult as a wide range of views on the Gagauz question existed within the Agrarian majority. Agrarians Snegur and Ungureanu had negotiated a compromise which both sides could agree upon. However, fellow Agrarian party members Lucinschi and Rusu then worked to defeat the draft bill by amending it beyond recognition. The future of the bill was dependent upon winning critical votes on the floor of the parliament.

Without party discipline the draft autonomy bill would likely have failed as Cotorobai's project had done a year earlier. However, key institutional changes had equipped party leaders with the ability to control the majority. Due to closed lists and one electoral district, deputies were influenced more by party leaders than by constituents. Changes in parliamentary rules allowed leaders to pressure deputies to follow the party's lead. Side payments of plum leadership positions and favoured commission assignments were used to aid party discipline. Rules against the creation of new parliamentary parties gave new importance to threats of expulsion from the party. Party leaders went so far as to threaten

¹⁴⁹ PARM, *Stenogram Parlamenta Respubliki Moldova -- XIII (11:15-11.40)*.

¹⁵⁰ Topal related how he and several other Gagauz leaders approached Lucinschi during one of the breaks and had a "very unpleasant" conversation about the proceedings. See Topal, Personal Interview with Author.

deputies with the expulsion from parliament if deputies refused to vote the party line on important issues.¹⁵¹

The ability to maintain discipline helped Ungureanu and Senic defeat damaging amendments and keep the compromise intact. When the last article of the draft measure was finally brought before the parliament for a vote, the Gagauz leaders remained in the chamber. The key parts of the law had been salvaged and accepted by the Gagauz. It was approved by parliament with a vote of 69 deputies in favour and 2 against.

In the end, party leaders had countered Lucinschi's efforts, protected the agreement, and passed legislation agreeable to the Gagauz. As illustrated in Figure 5.3, Lucinschi had aimed to alter the draft law so that it moved outside the compromise limit of the Gagauz while remaining within the preferences of the conservative Agrarian deputies. Instead, the final draft was approved and stayed within the intersection of the Gagauz compromise limits and Agrarian party preferences. This reflected the Gagauz desire for a settlement and the majority party's discipline to defeat controversial amendments.¹⁵² After the vote, the Gagauz

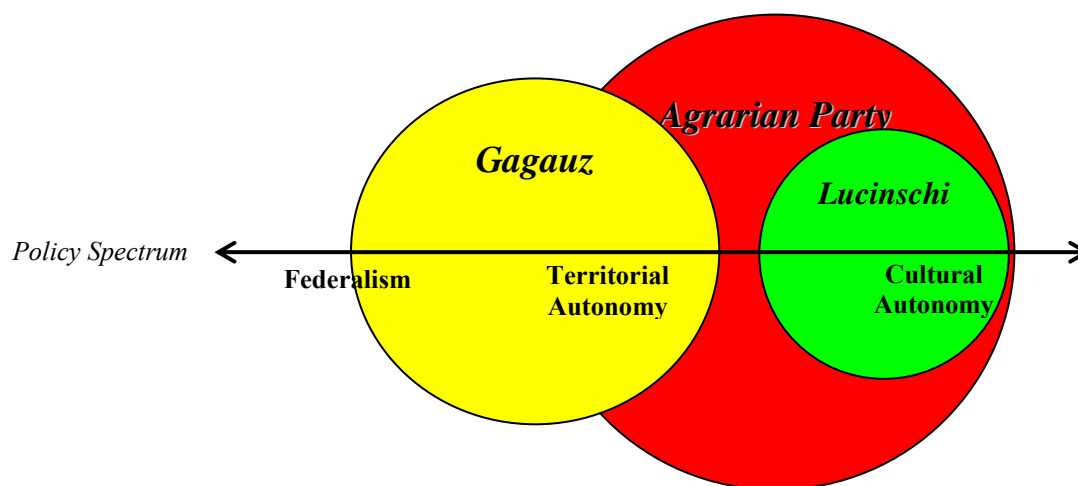


Figure 5.3: Preference Boundaries for Agrarian Party, the Gagauz, and Lucinschi

¹⁵¹ Rusu related how the party leaders threatened to strip the deputies of their mandates and force rebel deputies to leave parliament but eventually the deputies with a legal background concluded that parties did not have that authority. See Rusu, Personal Interview with Author.

called the law the “optimum solution” and leaders from both sides declared the end of the confrontation between Comrat and Chişinău.¹⁵³

IMPLEMENTATION

The success or failure of the effort now depended on the implementation of the agreement. Poor implementation could jeopardize the compromise. The challenge was to create a political structure that would match the vision of both groups. Recognizing the risks, Prime Minister Sangheli established an Implementation Commission with an even distribution of officials—twelve from each side.¹⁵⁴ Stepan Topal, the Gagauz president, led the Gagauz delegation. Moldova’s chairman of the Implementation Commission was Valeri Bulgari, one of the government’s vice prime ministers who had been elected to parliament as an Agrarian deputy. Taking advantage of the spirit of compromise, Bulgari and the new commission moved quickly to implement the law.¹⁵⁵

In March 1995 referendums were held to determine which communities would join the new autonomous region.¹⁵⁶ Of the thirty-six communities which participated, five mixed-population communities voted against the measure and two failed to clear the 60% threshold for minimum participation. The remaining twenty-nine communities became part of the new

¹⁵² Burgudji, Personal Interview with Author; Topal, Personal Interview with Author.

¹⁵³ INFOTAG, “Gagauz Leader Calls Law ‘Optimum’,” (23 December 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-250, 29 December 1994a.

¹⁵⁴ Ungureanu Archives, *Hotarire Nr. 31: Cu Privire La Masurile De Realizare a Hotaririi Parlamentului Republicii Moldova “Pentru Punerea in Aplicare a Legii Privind Statutul Juridic Special Al Gagauziei (Gagauz-Yeri)*, signed by Andrei Sangheli, 17 January 1995. By special request from President Snegur, Ungureanu, the parliamentary commission chairman, was named as the vice-chairman of the government’s commission to reassure the Gagauz.

¹⁵⁵ Valeria Bulgari, Personal Interview with Author in Chişinău, 22 September 2004. The commission had several responsibilities: (1) manage the referendums to determine which villages would join the autonomous region; (2) hold the elections for the people’s assembly deputies and Başkan (governor); (3) set up security structures while disarming the Gagauz population; and (4) provide a legal interpretation of the parliament’s law. One complicated issue was how to reconcile the rest of Moldova’s legal code and constitution with the new Gagauz political structures. The parliament’s legal office conducted several reviews in order to clarify the new law. For an example, see PARM, *AVIZ La Proiectul Hotaririi Parlamentului Pentru Apobarea Regulamentului Provizoriu Privind Alegerea Adunarii Populare (Halc Toplushu) Shi a Gvernatorului (Başcanului) Gagauziei (Gagauz-Ieri)*, signed by Boris Negru, Aparatul Parlamentului Republicii Moldova Directsia Juridica, 25 January 1995.

¹⁵⁶ The Gagauz had produced a much longer list of communities but Bulgari negotiated a compromise position of 36. See Bulgari, Personal Interview with Author.

Gagauz autonomous region. The vote revealed widespread support as 89.6% voted in favour of joining the autonomous region. International observers declared the elections fair and free.¹⁵⁷

On 28 May 1995, the 29 communities of the Gagauz autonomous region went to the polls. They voted to elect the new governor or *Başkan*, choose the thirty-five member People's Assembly, and determine the autonomous region's capital. Georgi Tabunshik, who had been outside of the autonomy movement, was subsequently elected in a run-off election with Kendigelian. On 20 June, Tabunshik was sworn in as *Başkan* and on 23 June, the People's Assembly held their opening session in Comrat, the new capital of the autonomous region. At the inauguration, Snegur noted that Moldova "demonstrated to the entire world that all differences may be settled politically."¹⁵⁸ With the key pieces of the law in place, Prime Minister Sangheli officially confirmed an end to the five-year conflict on 1 August 1995.¹⁵⁹

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter provides an institutional account of the adoption of territorial autonomy for the Gagauz. To explain the success of the 1994 parliament in contrast to the failed efforts of the previous parliaments, I argue that certain institutional changes enabled party leaders to exert sufficient agenda control. The outcome was the compromise agreement on Gagauz autonomy.

The institutional explanation outlined in this chapter challenges currently accepted views about why the 1994 settlement occurred. One common assertion is that fluid Gagauz

¹⁵⁷ Council of Europe, *Relations with the Republic of Moldova*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, 20 March 1995. The Council of Europe observers were impressed with the determination of both Moldovans and Gagauz to implement the law in a manner which would "bring about political stability by putting an end to the duality of power, thus easing tensions and liberating the way to address economic problems and democratic reform."

¹⁵⁸ INFOTAG, "Snegur Speaks at Gagauz Bashkan Inauguration," (20 June 1995), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, 21 June 1995.

¹⁵⁹ Dan Ionescu, "Moldova Declares End to Gagauz Conflict," *RFE/RL Newslines*, 3 August 1995.

preferences changed from demanding “outright independence” to accepting autonomy.¹⁶⁰

The idea of “shifting” preferences holds that the Gagauz elite decided to settle with Moldova after they calculated that autonomy would allow them to strengthen their position in the region.¹⁶¹ This view asserts that the autonomy settlement came about due to a moderation of Gagauz demands.

I argue that the settlement was a function of the struggles in Chişinău, not Comrat. As discussed extensively in Chapters One and Two, Gagauz demands for territorial autonomy remained steady and narrow from 1989 onward. The Gagauz negotiators in 1994 were the same that agreed to autonomy in Cotorobai’s Commission. It was the Gagauz who waited for the Moldovans to overcome their own institutional struggles and approve the compromise agreement.

Another view credits the settlement of the Gagauz issue to the 1994 election and the new make-up of Moldova’s parliament. These authors argue that the 1994 election changed the “composition” of the parliament and leadership.¹⁶² In this view Moldova needed to overcome the Popular Front’s numeric control of the parliament.¹⁶³ Due to the election results, Snegur and Sangheli could act on issues like Gagauz autonomy.¹⁶⁴

Upon closer examination, Moldova did not experience a significant turnover in the political leadership due to the election.¹⁶⁵ And while the 1994 election was a significant event, the election itself does not explain how the autonomy law was passed by Moldova’s parliament. Other factors must be considered. It was the new electoral law which translated

¹⁶⁰ Chinn and Roper, “Territorial Autonomy in Gagauzia,” 96.

¹⁶¹ King, “Minorities Policy in the Post-Soviet Republics: The Case of the Gagauzi,” 752; King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 217.

¹⁶² Batt, “Federalism Versus Nationalism in Post-Communist State- Building: The Case of Moldova,” 43; Crowther, “Ethnic Politics and the Post-Communist Transition in Moldova,” 158.

¹⁶³ Roper, “Regionalism in Moldova: The Case of Transnistria and Gagauzia,” 110; Thompson, “The Gagauz in Moldova and Their Road to Autonomy,” 135.

¹⁶⁴ Batt, “Federalism Versus Nationalism in Post-Communist State- Building: The Case of Moldova,” 43.

¹⁶⁵ President Snegur, Prime Minister Sangheli, and Parliamentary Chairman Lucinschi remained in office. Prior to the election, the Agrarian party represented 36% of the Parliament’s total mandates, and 43% of the deputies. In the 1994 election, the Agrarians captured 43% of the popular vote and 54% of the total seats.

a plurality of the electorate's support into a majority of seats in the parliament. It was new parliamentary rules which provided a means for party leaders to instil party discipline in their members. It was the new constitution which empowered the president and allowed him to pressure the parliament to act. By focusing only on the election results, this view overstates the impact of popular support and fails to appreciate the key institutional changes outlined in this chapter.

I credit three specific changes with providing the means by which Moldova's leaders settled the Gagauz question. First, changes in the electoral law were made to produce stronger parties. Several aspects of the law determined how proportional representation was applied such as the minimum threshold required for representation and the design of electoral districts. The minimum threshold barred smaller parties from gaining seats; the country-wide electoral district benefited parties with broader support rather than regionally based ones. These changes helped the Agrarian party maximize their electoral success and marginalize possible veto players such as the Popular Front and other parliamentary opposition parties. This significantly reduced the number and power of the political parties that were against Gagauz autonomy.

Second, parliamentary rules created the new permanent bureau which was staffed by Agrarian party leaders. This allowed the Agrarians to gain a majority of the Bureau's seats, control the selection of parliamentary leaders, and set the legislative agenda. By determining who would occupy certain positions, Agrarian party leaders were able to reward loyal deputies while also preventing the opposition from gaining leadership posts. Parliamentary rules also facilitated side payments for party leaders to offer deputies in exchange for support on important legislation. These rules also strengthened party discipline by using the threat of expulsion to coerce member compliance with leader preferences.

Third, changes in the constitution empowered the president and increased his influence with the parliament. From 1991 to 1993, Snegur watched as several measures he strongly supported (such as Gagauz autonomy and CIS membership) were defeated by the parliament. In 1994, an empowered Snegur, both by his membership in the Agrarian party and the new constitution, was able to counter the efforts of Lucinschi, the parliamentary chairman, to delay or kill the draft Gagauz bill. Snegur pressured parliament to put the Gagauz issue back onto the agenda for a second reading and kept the negotiated compromise alive.

Moldova's experience supports the proposition that drastic changes to the status quo are possible if party leaders (1) command a strong degree of agenda control, (2) face relatively few veto players, and (3) enjoy the support of the president.¹⁶⁶ Agrarian leaders used their increased strength to create the conditions necessary to ensure the autonomy bill was voted into law, even when opposition to the measure existed. Table 5.4 on the following page summarizes the effects of the key institutional changes on Gagauz autonomy.

With the new institutional arrangement, the majority party was able to control the parliament and produce desired policy changes. As a result, Moldova's leaders negotiated an agreement which was supported by the Gagauz and passed by Moldova's parliament. The successful implementation of the autonomy law accommodated Gagauz demands and reincorporated the national minority into the Republic of Moldova.

¹⁶⁶ Döring, "Institutions and Policies: Why We Need Cross-National Analysis," 44; Haggard, McCubbins, and Shugart, "Conclusion: Policy Making in Presidential Systems," 319; Immergut, *Health Politics: Interests and Institutions in Western Europe*; Shugart and Haggard, "Institutions and Public Policy in Presidential Systems," 65; Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*, 185-86.

Table 5.4 Effects of Institutional Changes on Gagauz Autonomy

<i>Institutional change</i>	<i>Causal effect</i>	<i>Impact on Gagauz autonomy</i>
New electoral law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4% threshold - closed lists - proportional representation - a single district 	Stronger parliamentary parties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agrarian absolute majority and supermajority with Socialist/Edinstvo bloc - attractive party for senior leaders (Snegur) Weaker opposition parties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - smaller representation in parliament 	<p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agrarian leadership sponsorship of draft bill - prevented seats for anti-Gagauz parties
New parliamentary rules and procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - created permanent bureau <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- proportional representation -- majority rule decision-making -- selected leadership positions - selected commission memberships - prohibited new party formulation - right of expulsion from party 	Stronger Agrarian majority rule <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more parliamentary leadership positions - 8/10 commission chairmanships - more influence on commission chairmen - more agenda-setting power Less veto players <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no commission chairmanships - no leadership positions - no impact on quorum rule Increased Agrarian party discipline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - coercive measures to ensure votes - side payments to reward loyalty 	<p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ungureanu committed to achieving a settlement - favourable Gagauz representation on commission - compromise protected - deputies reject damaging amendments
New constitution and presidential powers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dissolve parliament - call referendum - veto authority - propose legislation - decree authority 	Stronger Snegur <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more influence in negotiations - more influence with parliament - increase in agenda-setting power 	<p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - negotiated compromise - pressured parliament

CHAPTER 6: TURKEY: THE INFLUENCE OF PATRON STATES

6.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I argue that institutional arrangements were a major causal factor in Moldova's adoption of autonomy for the Gagauz. In this chapter I consider the most viable alternative explanation which asserts that internal factors like agenda control were not sufficient to produce a settlement between Moldova and the Gagauz. Instead, it is argued, external factors were essential to reach a compromise. This view posits that Turkey, as a regional actor and patron state for the Gagauz, used various forms of foreign aid to induce Moldova and the Gagauz to negotiate a settlement. By so doing, Turkey had a causal influence on Moldova's successful handling of the Gagauz question. I examine the evidence for this alternative explanation in order to avoid overstating the causal weight that should be accorded to institutional arrangements.¹

To assess this alternative explanation, I analyze the external influence of Turkey while also considering the role of the Council of Europe and Russia. I then review the historic relationship between the Gagauz and Turkey before providing a detailed narrative of their interactions during the period of 1991-1994.

I argue that Turkey's assistance was valuable but not essential for a settlement to be reached between Moldova and the Gagauz. Turkey advocated the Gagauz position to Moldova while helping Moldova deal with the Gagauz. However, Turkey stayed on the periphery while Moldova and the Gagauz eventually negotiated a settlement in 1994-95.

6.2 Patron States and Negotiated Settlements

One explanation of autonomous power-sharing agreements focuses on external factors. It argues that these agreements are more likely to be established if the international

¹ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 217.

community or an outside actor becomes involved in conflict resolution.² International influence is considered to be most consequential when the external actor is a “patron” to the minority nationality.³ In general, these patron or kin-states can use the ethnic relationship to justify their interference in the domestic affairs of another sovereign state.⁴ While most host nation states generally interpret patron state interest as hostile, there is research to support that secessionist movements are *less* likely to succeed when external intervention becomes actively involved.⁵ International involvement generally results in outcomes which fall short of secession such as ceasefires and amnesties. With outside help, the minority nationalist leaders cede control of the political demands to external actors who have more limited objectives.⁶

International or third-party involvement also has significant effects on the host country. In most states, democratic or otherwise, the majority in government or the parliament is unlikely to give up control willingly.⁷ An external actor is often needed to offer a variety of inducements such as aid, loan credits, and favourable trade agreements to the host country.⁸ By employing these “incentives and disincentives—carrots and sticks,” the two parties are encouraged to end the violence and begin to negotiate. The external actor convinces the host country’s majority and minority nationality to compromise and find a

² Yash Pal Ghai, "Ethnicity and Autonomy: A Framework for Analysis," in *Autonomy and Ethnicity: Negotiating Competing Claims in Multi-Ethnic States*, ed. Yash P. Ghai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000a), 15-16.

³ Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination*, 456-58; Timothy D. Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1996), 87-114.

⁴ Jonathan P. Stein, "Introduction," in *The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post-Communist Europe: State-Building*, ed. Jonathan P. Stein (New York: East West Institute, 2000).

⁵ Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination*, 456.

⁶ Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 277.

⁷ Ghai, "Ethnicity and Autonomy: A Framework for Analysis," 14.

⁸ Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts*, 101-02.

mutual agreement.⁹ Extensive international involvement in establishing the agreement is linked to more durable solutions.¹⁰

This explanation deserves a closer look in regards to Moldova and the Gagauz. If external factors played an indispensable role in delivering the settlement, the significance of the institutional changes described in the preceding chapters decreases. If not supported, the rejection of this viable alternative explanation strengthens the central thesis regarding the role of institutional features on Moldova's ability to accommodate the Gagauz.¹¹

Turkey's actions as an external actor are the main focus of this chapter but other external actors were active in Moldova. One was the Council of Europe. Council of Europe representatives and Gagauz officials expressed their opinion that Moldova was enticed to offer autonomy to the Gagauz in order to receive formal Council of Europe membership.¹² These officials suggested that at the urging of the Council of Europe, Moldova may have compromised with the Gagauz in order to gain the international visibility and prestige that accompanied Council of Europe membership.¹³ Outside of the Baltic States, Moldova was the first former Soviet republic to be granted membership.

My findings show that while the Council of Europe encouraged the protection of minority rights, it did not facilitate the settlement of the Gagauz question. After receiving Moldova's application for membership, Council of Europe delegations urged Moldova's parliament to protect the rights of its minority nationalities through specifically worded

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Kjell-Ake Nordquist, "Autonomy as a Conflict-Solving Mechanism--an Overview," in *Autonomy: Applications and Implications*, ed. Markku Suksi (The Hague; London: Kluwer Law International, 1998), 73.

¹¹ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*.

¹² Michael Shafir, "Martinez in Chişinău," *RFE/RL Newsline*, 24 February 1995; Dmitrii I. Uzun, Interview with Daniela Gutu in Chişinău, 21 October 2004.

¹³ Moldova's enthusiasm for the Council of Europe has not waned. In May 2003, Moldova received the rotating six-month chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers. When President Vladimir Voronin officially took the position, he called it the "most authoritative rostrum in Europe." See Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, *Welcoming Address by Vladimir Voronin*, Opening Session, 1 October 2003.

legislation.¹⁴ The Council of Europe did not support a territorially-based solution for the Gagauz because it would show preference to one of Moldova's nationalities.¹⁵ As a result, Cotorobai and opposition leaders used a Council of Europe review of the proposed legislation to help defeat the compromise in 1993.¹⁶ A year later, another Council of Europe report recommended against passing the Ungureanu draft law and advised that Moldova not grant territorial autonomy to the Gagauz as it could create a state within a state.¹⁷ Instead of territorial autonomy, the report again recommended that the Gagauz could be protected using conventional minority rights legislation.¹⁸ Snegur's presidential aide noted that the Council of Europe created "impediments" and almost helped to break the compromise.¹⁹ In the end, Ungureanu dismissed the bulk of the report's recommendations.²⁰ President Snegur recognized that the Council of Europe had a limited appreciation of Moldova's domestic issues.²¹

Another external actor was Russia. Russia influenced events in Moldova but was almost exclusively focused on Transnistria. Russia's support of Transnistria was due to the presence of the old Soviet 14th army, the substantial Russian minority in the region, and the

¹⁴ FBIS, "Snegur Talks with Council of Europe Group," *Radio Chişinău Network*, (20 July 1992), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-92-142, 23 July 1992h.

¹⁵ BASAPRESS, "European Council Opposes Federalization on Ethnic Bases."

¹⁶ Council of Europe, *Rapport D'expertise Relative a La Situation Des Gagaouzes En Republique De Moldova*, Strausborg: Council of Europe, 28 July 1993. This was repeated in 1994 when opposition parties used a new Council of Europe report to strengthen their opposition to Ungureanu's compromise agreement. See INFOTAG, "Opposition Voices Opinions," (27 December 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-250, 29 December 1994b.

¹⁷ BASAPRESS, "Council of Europe Criticizes Draft Bill on Gagauz."; Council of Europe, *Expertise on a Special Status for the Gagaouzes in Moldova*.

¹⁸ BASAPRESS, "Lucinschi, Others Address Conference on Local Autonomy," (8 November 1994), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC94-000099124, 10 November 1994m.

¹⁹ Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author.

²⁰ BASAPRESS, "Council of Europe Criticizes Draft Bill on Gagauz Region."

²¹ Snegur, Personal Interview with Author. The predecessor to the OSCE was also against the law. In December 1994 before the second reading, CSCE High Commissioner for Ethnic Minorities, Max van der Stoep, visited Moldova and announced that "by passing the law on a special status of densely Gagauz-populated regions, the Moldovan parliament creates a dangerous precedent for Europe." See INTERFAX, "CSCE Official Opposes Granting Autonomy to Gagauz," (9 December 1994), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC94-000110261, 9 December 1994a.

territory's historic association with the Soviet Union.²² Much to the disappointment of Moldova, Russia defended Transnistria's right to exist. Much to the disappointment of the Gagauz, Russia did not defend the right of the Gagauz Republic to exist. From Gorbachev to Yeltsin, Moscow ignored Gagauz requests for assistance and recognition. As described in Chapter One, Gagauz President Stepan Topal criticized Russia and asked "why Gorbachev and Lukianov have been unable for so long to say anything intelligible concerning...the Gagauz Republic."²³ When Russia led an international conference to discuss the situation between Moldova and Transnistria, Gagauz leaders unsuccessfully appealed to Yeltsin for inclusion of the Gagauz issue on the agenda.²⁴ Gagauz leaders noted that they attempted to establish closer ties with Russia but without result. Kendigelian complained of Russia's "double standards," of "fooling" the Gagauz, and providing absolutely "no help."²⁵ When Transnistrian leaders disapproved of the Gagauz for negotiating with Moldova, Topal told them, "You are beyond the river; it is like the Wall of China for you. Russia is behind you, but not behind Gagauzia."²⁶

Of all external players in the region, Turkey exerted by far the most influence on Moldova and the Gagauz. Turkey first showed interest in the Gagauz just after the establishment of the Turkish republic. I now briefly discuss how Turkey discovered the Gagauz prior to the imposition of Soviet control (1931-1945) and then explore how Turkey became reacquainted with the region in the late Soviet period (1986-1991).

²² For a closer examination of this issue, see Kolstø and Malgrin, "The Transnistrian Republic: A Case of Politicized Regionalism."; Neukirch, "Russia and the OSCE- the Influence of Interested Third and Disinterested Fourth Parties on the Conflicts in Estonia and Moldova." Also, Chapter Nine of King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*.

²³ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, "My Nakhodimsia Mezhdue Nebom I Zemlei."

²⁴ RIA, "Gagauz Parliament Appeals to Yeltsin, Kozyrev," (28 May 1992), reprinted in FBIS Document, FC92-000060733, 28 May 1992.

²⁵ See Kendigelian, Personal Interview with Author.

²⁶ Topal, Personal Interview with Author.

6.2.1 Historical Context: Turkey and the Gagauz

After the establishment of modern Turkey in 1923, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver was appointed as the ambassador to Romania.²⁷ Tanrıöver was credited by modern leaders for discovering the Gagauz on behalf of Turkey.²⁸ For over a decade, Tanrıöver served as Turkey's ambassador to Romania which then included modern day Moldova. After arriving in Romania in 1931, Tanrıöver assumed responsibility for identifying Turkish groups who had left the Ottoman Empire over a century earlier.²⁹ Tanrıöver found the Gagauz living in southern Bessarabia (modern Moldova) in the newly delineated Romanian state. Tanrıöver's activities with the Turkic groups like the Gagauz were said to have been undertaken with the explicit permission of the Turkish President İnönü.³⁰ At the highest levels of government Tanrıöver argued that Turkey's official definition of the Turkish 'race' could be applied to groups like the Gagauz. In his view, Turkishness included groups who had lost their Muslim identity. He also took on a missionary zeal to educate them of their Turkish origins and protect their Turkish cultural attributes.

After finding the Gagauz, Tanrıöver met with local priests and intellectuals to coordinate the establishment of Turkish education in Gagauz towns and villages. He organized the appointment of teachers to these schools from the graduates of the Mecidiye Muslim Seminar in Dobruja, the coastal region of modern day Romania and Bulgaria. With material support from Turkey in the form of textbooks, and political support of the Romanian government, Tanrıöver was able to provide classes in Turkish to approximately twenty-five

²⁷ Tanrıöver was appointed by a written decree of the Council of Ministers. See Hasan Celâl Güzel, C. Cem Oğuz, and Osman Karatay, *The Turks*, 6 vols. (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2002), 522.

²⁸ Demirel, Personal Interview with Author.

²⁹ Much of the following discussion about Tanrıöver is taken from Argunsah's work. See Argunsah, "The History of Gagauz."

³⁰ Demirdirek, "(Re)Making of a Place and Nation: Gagauzia in Moldova" 194.

Gagauz schools.³¹ The Romanian government granted permission for the Turkish language courses and reportedly even paid the salaries of the Turkish teachers.³² Thanks to Tanrıöver's efforts, some 38 Gagauz students went to Turkey for the opportunity to study.³³

Tanrıöver believed that the Gagauz, regardless of their Christian affiliation, should be repatriated to Turkey.³⁴ The Gagauz students who had arrived in Turkey were eventually given identity cards which stated "Turkish Orthodox" rather than "Christian Orthodox" by decree of Turkey's Council of Ministers.³⁵ The repatriation plan was terminated when the Soviets reclaimed Bessarabia in the 1940 invasion of Romania.³⁶ Even so, Tanrıöver considered his work with the Gagauz as one of his most significant accomplishments during his time in Romania. It is viewed by Turkish scholars as a "golden era in the Gagauz history."³⁷

At the end of World War II, Turkey's activities in Moldova (then part of Romania), were frozen in time. Further expansion of Turkish-Gagauz relations became impossible after the Soviet annexation of "Bessarabia" and the creation of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. Similar to the historic enmity between the Ottoman and Russian empires, Turkey and the Soviet Union were on opposite sides of the Cold War. Turkey joined NATO with

³¹ Ibid; Harun Güngör and Mustafa Argunsah, *Dünden Bugüne Gagauzlar* (Ankara: Elektronik İletişim Ajansı Yayınları, 1993).

³² Argunsah, "The History of Gagauz," 522-24.

³³ Demirdirek, "(Re)Making of a Place and Nation: Gagauzia in Moldova" 194.

³⁴ Howard Eissenstat, "Metaphors of Race and Discourse of Nation: Racial Theory and State Nationalism in the First Decades of the Turkish Republic," in *Race and Nation: Ethnic Systems in the Modern World*, ed. Paul Spickard (New York; London: Routledge, 2005), 253. In a footnote (#68), Eissenstat states that Atatürk had a similar plan but that after his death in 1938, the plan was forgotten. See Eissenstat, "Metaphors of Race and Discourse of Nation: Racial Theory and State Nationalism in the First Decades of the Turkish Republic," 256.

³⁵ Eissenstat, "Metaphors of Race and Discourse of Nation: Racial Theory and State Nationalism in the First Decades of the Turkish Republic," 253. Eissenstat writes that the use of "Turkish" as an adjective to describe the Gagauz immigrant was an effort to "create a metaphor that would unite a linguistically and culturally diverse population into a single nation."

³⁶ Argunsah, "The History of Gagauz," 524; Eissenstat, "Metaphors of Race and Discourse of Nation: Racial Theory and State Nationalism in the First Decades of the Turkish Republic," 253.

³⁷ Argunsah, "The History of Gagauz," 524-25. The Gagauz memory of Tanrıöver was markedly different from the romantic Turkish view. For example, Stepan Topal, the Gagauz leader and President of the 'Gagauz Republic' from 1990-1995, had heard of "150 students" selected to go to Turkish Universities in the 1920s. While some of them stayed, he recalled that others "escaped" because the Gagauz were being forced to accept Islam. See Topal, Zlatov, and Telpiz, Personal Interview with Author.

Greece in 1952 and was a loyal member of the forces in opposition to the Soviet 'threat.'

Turkey's allegiance to the West restricted its relations with the Soviets to bounds acceptable to the US and other Western allies. With Gorbachev and the warming of relations between Europe and the USSR, Turkey slowly became reacquainted with the Turkic peoples of the former Soviet Union, including the Gagauz. A half century later Turkey's modern leadership picked up where Tanrıöver left off.

END OF THE COLD WAR (1986-1991)

Prior to the dissolution of the USSR, Turkey attempted to improve relations with the Soviet Union. In July 1986, Turkey's Prime Minister Turgut Özal visited Moscow to develop economic ties with the Soviets and discuss the construction of a pipeline to import natural gas from Siberia in exchange for Turkish goods. The lack of priority given to Soviet-Turkish relations by the USSR was evident by Gorbachev's decision not to meet with Özal as had been expected. The prime minister assessed that "his visit to the Soviet Union did not perhaps open a new page in Turkish-Soviet relations, but was not unsuccessful either."³⁸ Regarding the rest of the Soviet Republics, Turkey generally only dealt with them through Moscow. As the cold war came to an end, Turkey had few direct links with the Turkic peoples of the Soviet Union, including the Gagauz.³⁹

The Gagauz did not appear on the Turkish popular scene until the infamous October 1990 volunteer incursion of Moldovan nationalists into the Gagauz region of southern Moldova.⁴⁰ For nearly two weeks, Turkish news carried daily reports of the activities between Moldova's central government and the Gagauz.⁴¹ Five days into the standoff between Gagauz and Moldovan volunteers, the incident became a front page story in Turkey

³⁸ ITAR-TASS, "Turkish Premier Ends Visit," (30 July 1986), reprinted in the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 4 August 1986.

³⁹ Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (London: Hurst, 2002), 270.

⁴⁰ See Chapter Two for more details on the 1990 volunteer incursion.

⁴¹ See the *Turkish Daily News* from 27-28 October to 9 November for articles on the Gagauz in Moldova.

with photos printed of Gagauz leaders and Soviet soldiers.⁴² It even prompted a statement from the Turkish Foreign Ministry whose spokesman affirmed Turkey's position that the Gagauz and Moldovan affair was an internal problem but that "Ankara is very much interested in the matter and urges restraint [by Moldova]."⁴³

After the 1990 confrontation with Moldovan nationalists, the Gagauz started to venture out to make contacts with Turkey and other countries. From the Gagauz perspective, relations with Turkey offered hope of international support for their plight in southern Moldova. Their Turkish connection would be useful in establishing their new political entity on the world map. This period was one of 'rediscovery' for Turkey and the Gagauz. To become reacquainted, various projects were initiated. For example, the Gagauz television director in the largest Gagauz city of Comrat requested more programming through the Anatolia Agency in Moscow "oriented towards Turkish culture."⁴⁴ A few months later, a new Gagauz National University was opened in Comrat, among other things to train educators in the Gagauz language. Because of a lack of sufficient funding from Moldova, those involved announced their intention to appeal to Turkey for assistance.⁴⁵ Though small steps, it showed a growing Gagauz interest in Turkey and the resources Turkey had to offer. Gradually Turkey's presence in Moldova increased; however, this was not only happening in Moldova.

With Gorbachev opening the door for rapprochement of East and West, Turkey began to reassert itself in the Soviet sphere. Less than five years after Özal's disappointing visit to the USSR in 1986, the situation between Turkey and the Soviet Union had changed

⁴² See front page article in 1 November 1990 Turkish Daily News and photos on 31 October and 2 November. On 2 November 1990, an article entitled "The Gagauz in Moldavia" by Türkkaya Ataöv seems to introduce the Gagauz to the readers. See Turkish Daily News, "The Gagauz in Moldavia," 2 November 1990a.

⁴³ United Press International, "Turkey Remains Cautious on Secessionist Moves by Soviet Turks," (accessed via LexisNexis), 2 November 1990.

⁴⁴ Turkish Daily News, "Gagavuz Turks Unhappy," 9 November 1990b.

⁴⁵ ITAR-TASS, "Gagauz University Opens in Moldavia," (accessed via LexisNexis), 18 February 1991a.

significantly. Now as the president of Turkey, Özal visited Moscow again.⁴⁶ On March 16, 1991, the Kremlin and Gorbachev “rolled out the red carpet” for President Özal.⁴⁷ The visit had symbolic value as it was the seventy year anniversary of the initial treaty signed by Lenin and Atatürk which established relations between the Soviet Union and the modern republic of Turkey. Maintaining caution even within an ever-weakening Soviet state, Özal signed an accord in which the two parties agreed not to interfere in one another’s internal affairs.⁴⁸ After his visit in Moscow, Özal then visited Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan where he strengthened bilateral ties by meeting with individual leaders of each republic.

On this historic visit, Turkey revived the mission of Tanrıöver and began to develop its role in relation to the great Turkish nation, which included the Gagauz. During his stay in Moscow Özal met with local Meskhetian Turk leaders and also Stepan Topal, the president of the Gagauz Republic.⁴⁹ Topal asked Turkey for support to set up the Gagauz republic which had been declared in 1990.⁵⁰ These discussions between Özal and Topal likely increased Gagauz optimism that assistance from Turkey was forthcoming. Visits between Gagauz leaders and Turkish officials became more frequent.⁵¹ Turkey was emerging as an ally for the Gagauz in their struggle with Moldova.

The March 1991 visit to the Soviet Union by Özal marked an improved relationship with the Soviet Union and opened the door for direct relations with individual republics. For

⁴⁶ Özal served as Prime Minister from 1983-1989 and then as President of the Republic until his death in 1993.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Eyal, "Statesman Who Made Turkey a Crucial Player," *The Guardian*, April 10 1991.

⁴⁸ Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War*, 276.

⁴⁹ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, "First Round of Talks between Turkish and Soviet Presidents," *Ankara radio broadcast*, (accessed via LexisNexis), transcribed and published in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 11 March 1991b; INFO-NOVA, "Ozal Denies Meeting with Gagauz Secret," *IAN*, (24 September 1991), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-198-A, 11 October 1991; Kendigelian, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁰ ROMPRES, "Iliescu, Turkey's Ozal End Talks, Sign Treaty," (19 September 1991), reprinted in FBIS document, FC91-000082224, 20 September 1991.

⁵¹ Not long after Topal’s meeting with Özal, Mikhail Kendigelian, then acting as speaker of the Gagauz parliament, met with Prime Minister Akbulut in Turkey and returned with promises of economic aid, Turkish teachers, and direct satellite links to Turkish television. See *The Economist*, "Meet Gagauzia and Transdnistria," 6 April 1991.

Turkey, it was both good security strategy and economic sense.⁵² With the Warsaw Pact dissolved, bilateral trade between Turkey and the Soviet Union worth \$1.9 billion, and Turkey's regional role being redefined, the former Turkic peoples became a priority in Turkish politics. At the same time, Özal initiated and adhered to a policy of non-interference, ensuring that relations with Turkic nationalities did not hinder relations with the sovereign state in which they lived.

6.2.2 Turkey: *The Patron State*

To understand the extent of Turkey's influence, I now consider three aspects of Turkey's relationship with Moldova and the Gagauz. The first was Turkey's strategic plan to administer aid to all Turkic peoples, including the Gagauz. The second was the type and amount of Turkey's assistance to the Gagauz. The third was President Demirel's historic visit to Moldova during the summer of 1994.

TURKEY'S STRATEGIC PLAN

After Özal's 1991 visit to Moscow, Turkey cultivated the Gagauz Turkic roots first planted by Tanrıöver. Around the time of the August 1991 coup, Turkey advanced ties with the Gagauz but also with Moldova.⁵³ A five-member Turkish delegation, headed by an adviser to Turkey's prime minister, came to investigate the state of the Turkic peoples in the Soviet Union and offer economic support. They visited Comrat and met with 35 representatives of the Gagauz people.⁵⁴ While stating that Turkey did not want to interfere in Moldova's internal affairs, Turkey stated that it could not "remain silent" if force was used

⁵² Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War*, 56.

⁵³ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, "Railway Situation Tense," *Russian television broadcast*, (accessed via LexisNexis), transcribed and published in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 25 September 1991c; ITAR-TASS, "Soviet Press Review," (accessed via LexisNexis), 5 August 1991c.

⁵⁴ Details on meeting found in FBIS, "Turkey Will Not 'Interfere' in Moldovan Problems," *Milliyet*, (24 September 1991), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-91-190, 1 October 1991i.

against the Gagauz.⁵⁵ This action marked the path Turkey had intentionally plotted: to encourage respect for the territorial borders of Moldova but also offer moral support for the Turkic Gagauz.

Turkey's carefully orchestrated policy still caused controversy. The more nationalist segments of Moldova's political elite warily eyed Turkey's interest in the Gagauz. The Popular Front of Moldova took note of the Turkish delegation meetings and publicly accused Turkey of adding to the separatist fervour of the Gagauz in Moldova. The Popular Front newspaper, *Sfatul Țării*, wrote how President Özal held "secret meetings" with the leaders of the Gagauz Republic during his visit to Moscow the previous spring.⁵⁶ The nationalists were also unhappy that Turkey refused to recognize Moldova's independence (declared in August 1991). The Popular Front continued to distrust Turkey when they asserted that Turkey was making its move to gain "strong control" over Moldova and warned of Turkey's interference in the former holdings of the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁷

President Özal responded to Moldova's opposition by stating that Turkey's decision to recognize Moldova's independence would depend on the "developments in the USSR" and the "relations between the independent republics and the Union."⁵⁸ This response was to be expected: Turkey would respect Soviet sovereignty as long as it was prudent. With the break-up of the Soviet Union in December 1991, Turkey then moved forward to build a bilateral relationship with the independent Republic of Moldova. On 27 December 1991, Turkey announced that it had officially recognized Moldova (in addition to Belarus and Ukraine) during a Council of Ministers meeting on 16 December.⁵⁹ Turkey was one of the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Turkey confirmed the meetings had taken place, but insisted they had been "open and official" while addressing issues of mutual interest. See INFO-NOVA, "Ozal Denies Meeting with Gagauz Secret."

⁵⁷ BASAPRESS, "Party Criticizes Government 'Antinational' Policies."

⁵⁸ INFO-NOVA, "Ozal Denies Meeting with Gagauz Secret."

⁵⁹ FBIS, "Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine Officially Recognized," *TRT Television Broadcast*, (27 December 1991), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-WEU-91-250, 30 December 1991a.

first countries to recognize Moldova's independence which Turkish leaders were pleased to highlight in subsequent official engagements.

When Turkey recognized Moldova, then Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel did not miss the opportunity to remind Moldova that the Gagauz Turks "will act as a bridge for the further development of our bilateral relations and cooperation."⁶⁰ Turkey's interest in the Gagauz was carried out in the spirit of Tanrıöver in order to "reintegrate the Gagauz into the Turkic cultural world and to revive their Gagauz identity after the long period of Russification."⁶¹ From Turkey's perspective, the Gagauz were really Gagauz Turks, or in other words, another sort of Turk.⁶² Several initiatives were begun with many in the realm of education. As in the days of Tanrıöver, Gagauz students were given scholarships to study in Turkey.⁶³ Other efforts included the participation of 85 students in a Turkish summer course; sending Turkic-language textbooks to schools in the Gagauz region; and funding three Turkish scholars to teach Turkish to 120 students and 8 teachers at Comrat University.⁶⁴

Turkey's activities in Moldova on behalf of the Gagauz were neither unusual nor unprecedented but rather part of a larger strategic plan to further Turkey's own interests. It reflected a grand vision where Turkey would become a regional power after the demise of the Soviet Union. One scholar called this time a "period of euphoria" as Turkey moved first to establish relations with the Central Asian Republics who reciprocated Turkey's interest and desire to establish bilateral relations.⁶⁵ By December 1991, the presidents of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan had already visited Ankara. These 'brother states' had the advantage of being the Turk's original fatherland. Prime Minister Demirel

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ayten Kilic, "Turkey and the Gagauz," *Eurasian Studies*, no. 13 (1998), 47.

⁶² This important observation was pointed out by Howard Eissenstat in personal communication.

⁶³ Much of the following information on the cultural assistance given to the Gagauz is from Kilic, "Turkey and the Gagauz."

⁶⁴ Ibid, 47. Teachers were funded by the Turkish NGO Foundation for Studies of the Turkic World based in Istanbul.

⁶⁵ Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War*, 275.

returned the favour and visited these four Central Asian Republics in the spring of 1992. The significance of the ethno-national bond between the republics and Turkey was epitomized by the greeting of Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akayev for Demirel upon his arrival: "You have left these lands centuries ago on horseback and with slanted eyes. You came back riding in an airplane and with your eyes round."⁶⁶

Turkey's next tier after the Central Asian Republics was the former Soviet republics with sizable Turkic minorities. Moldova and Ukraine both fell in this category due to the Gagauz and Crimean Tatars respectively. In February 1992, Turkey hosted the foreign ministers of Moldova and Ukraine to sign protocols to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey. During the meeting with Moldova's foreign minister, Turkey's Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin emphasized Turkey's interest in the Turks outside of Turkey, specifically the "Gagauz Turks" in Moldova. Çetin stated that "it is our hope [the Gagauz will] benefit from the economic developments and rights (given by the new regime) and live as first class citizens."⁶⁷ These announcements depicted Turkey's self-designated role as guardian of the Turkic peoples.

Moldova took note of Turkey's growing pre-eminence in the region. Turkey's leadership declared Turkey to be a "model country," a "pioneer," and a leading member of "a gigantic Turkish world" which stretched from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China.⁶⁸ In June 1992, the heads of state from Moldova and ten other countries met in Istanbul, the realization of Turkey's initiative to create the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). In addition to being a regional moderator, the establishment of BSEC confirmed Turkey's design to become a regional power.⁶⁹ In Istanbul, Demirel held a private

⁶⁶ Ibid, 277. See footnote 19.

⁶⁷ Turkish Daily News, "Turkey Signs Accord with Moldova, Ukraine," 4 February 1992b.

⁶⁸ Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War*, 279-80.

⁶⁹ One report stated that at the conference, "Many of the visitors referred to Turkey's new role as a regional leader, with its relatively dynamic economy, good communications and a natural central role epitomized by the

summit meeting with Snegur and the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, and Romania to discuss solutions for increasingly violent civil war in Moldova between the central government and the pro-Russian Transnistrian region.⁷⁰ Turkey used the forum to moderate a ceasefire agreement and set the stage for playing a more visible role in other violent situations which had already begun to emerge in the post-Soviet space.⁷¹

A key finding is how Turkey's strategic vision and ethno-national bonds explain Turkey's involvement in Moldova and other former Soviet republics. Some authors have failed to appreciate the regional context. One view asserts that the Gagauz were important to Turkey because of their relative size in Moldova compared to other Turkic groups and the general receptive nature of the Gagauz to Turkey's overtures.⁷² Rather, Turkey's activities in Moldova reflected Turkey's policy to reach out to Turkic groups across the region while increasing Turkey's influence across the "gigantic Turkish world." Turkey's aid was one means to accomplish this goal.

TURKEY'S AID

As Turkey established assistance programs across the region, great care was made to ensure aid was provided in concert with the host government's consent. For example, a group of Turkish writers visited Moldova in September 1992, met with President Snegur and offered assistance to the Gagauz, but "only through official contact with the Moldovan government."⁷³ It was no surprise that Moldova's presidential office publicly praised the "constructive role" Turkey played in encouraging good relations between Moldova and the

Bosporus waterway." See Hugh Pope, "11 Black Sea Nations Vow to See Peace, Cooperation," *Los Angeles Times*, (accessed via LexisNexis), 26 July 1992.

⁷⁰ Turkish Daily News, "Turkey Scores High Points in Diplomacy," 27 June 1992a.

⁷¹ Several ethnic conflicts were taking place in the Soviet Union during that time, including Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Chechnya, and Transnistria. Of note, Turkey never hosted a forum to moderate the Gagauz conflict as those negotiations were already underway.

⁷² King, "Minorities Policy in the Post-Soviet Republics: The Case of the Gagauzi," 749.

⁷³ INTERFAX, "Snegur Says Only Cultural Autonomy for Gagauz," (25 September 1992), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-92-189, 29 September 1992e.

Gagauz.⁷⁴ I now examine three specific areas of assistance: monetary credit, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency, and education.

Turkey's increased presence in the region produced tangible benefits for Moldova and the Gagauz. In late spring of 1992, Moldova's prime minister, Valeriu Muravschi, visited Turkey and met with both President Özal and Prime Minister Demirel. Turkish officials discussed granting needed credits and signing a treaty on trade and economic ties during an upcoming trip by Demirel to Moldova.⁷⁵ Turkey's offer to Moldova was not unusual as Turkey had arranged to extend a billion dollar credit to several Central Asian countries.⁷⁶ For example, in 1992, an agreement worth \$75 million in promised credits was signed by Turkmenistan. The credits for the Gagauz were part of this larger program of aid for the region to fund projects that were jointly approved by Turkish banks, the Turkish government, and the host governments.

The model used in other countries was used in Moldova: the credit guaranteed by Turkey would be used on behalf of the Gagauz but administered by Moldova's government. Regarding how to use the Turkish credit, Gagauz President Stepan Topal suggested a project to improve the water situation in Gagauz, which he thought would appeal to Demirel's background as a civil engineer.⁷⁷ Demirel agreed and officially proposed that Moldova use the loan to improve the Gagauz water problems caused by droughts and the poor water supply systems. Moldova's government committed to use most of the funds for this purpose. However, Topal was a bit impatient with the political process required for the project to come to fruition. In February 1993, Topal travelled to Turkey and Cyprus reportedly to "demand

⁷⁴ Vladimir Socor, "Turkey Playing 'Constructive Role' in Moldova," *RFE/RL Daily Report* II, no. 22 (1993).

⁷⁵ FBIS, "Snegur Discusses Conflict with Russia," *Izvestiya*, (10 June 1992), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-92-112, 10 June 1992g. The significance of the credit has been overplayed by scholars writing on Moldova, including Socor, "Demirel Asserts Turkish Interests in Ukraine and Moldova."; Thompson, "The Gagauz in Moldova and Their Road to Autonomy."

⁷⁶ Demirel, Personal Interview with Author.

⁷⁷ Topal, Zlatov, and Telpiz, Personal Interview with Author.

those 35 million dollars which were promised...”⁷⁸ The Moldovan press reported that Topal acknowledged upon his return that the credit would only come to the Gagauz via Moldova.⁷⁹ Turkey had articulated that the credit would be extended via official arrangements between Turkey and the Republic of Moldova. This policy had clear implications for the Gagauz. Moldova’s government would fund the water project with the \$35 million dollar credit as long as the Gagauz recognized themselves as part of the Republic of Moldova. Given that Moldova’s government would bear the responsibility to repay the debt, this prudent policy was not unexpected.

As a separate initiative, Turkey’s consulate in Chişinău organized cultural, economic, and educational projects and assistance through the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA). TIKA was initially set-up in 1992 as an affiliate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to coordinate aid for the Soviet Turkic states of Central Asia. By 1993, it had officially expanded into Moldova. TIKA financed its own projects but also brought in technical expertise from Turkish agencies within the government such as the health ministry, central bank, and state universities.⁸⁰ Other projects were financed by government agencies, non-governmental organizations, or facilitated through contracts for private Turkish companies. TIKA activities were handled by a ‘program coordination office’ which opened in Chişinău in 1994.⁸¹ The aid was focused on projects for the Gagauz: equipment for a Turkish-Gagauz Culture House, support for Turkish language courses, a Gagauz Radio-TV project, as well as other regional projects.⁸² All the while, Turkish officials, like the Foreign minister, Hikmet Çetin, continued to reiterate that Turkey wanted to

⁷⁸ BASAPRESS, "Gagauz Leader Visits Cyprus and Turkey," (5 March 1993), reprinted in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 10 March 1993h.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ TIKA’s method of operations described by Musa Kulaklikaya, Personal Interview with Author in Ankara, 28 July 2005.

⁸¹ Ibid. TIKA has seen continued growth and had expanded to 16 program offices at the end of 2004 with projects conducted in additional countries through coordination with international organizations and established NGOs.

⁸² The project list was provided to author by TIKA’s Headquarters in Ankara.

help the economic and cultural prosperity of the Gagauz but only within a sovereign Moldova.⁸³ Of significance, TIKa coordinated its projects “face-to-face” through Chişinău to avoid suspicion that Turkey was in any way promoting Gagauz secession.⁸⁴

In 1994, the head of TIKa, Ambassador Umut Arik, met with Moldovan and Gagauz leaders to discuss technical, financial, and economic support.⁸⁵ Arik announced the intention to open a Moldovan-Turkish Culture Centre in Chişinău in order to develop Moldovan-Turkish relations.⁸⁶ Locating the Centre at Moldova State University in Chişinău expanded the Moldovan-Turkish relationship beyond the Gagauz dimension. TIKa also concentrated on economic activities to help Moldova. Some projects were conservative such as \$50,000 dollars for the construction of a brick making factory. Others were visionary such as an offer of Turkish assistance to build a 100 kilometre highway to unite Moldova’s borders with a future ‘Giurgiulesti Port’ located at the southwest corner of Moldova where the Prut and Danube rivers meet.⁸⁷ Arik also announced intentions of forwarding projects on Moldova’s behalf to the World Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.⁸⁸ These grand schemes certainly excited Gagauz and Moldovan audiences and showed Turkey’s dedication to keep good relations with both groups.

Education was also part of Turkey’s larger foreign policy through a program called the “Great Student Exchange Project.”⁸⁹ In the 1992-93 academic year, Turkey offered

⁸³ BASAPRESS, "Turkish Businessmen to Examine Investment Possibilities," (13 June 1993), reprinted in FBIS document FC93-000087665, 20 June 1993o.

⁸⁴ Insight on TIKa’s operations in Moldova was provided by Ambassador Umut Arik, first President of TIKa. See Umut Arik, Personal Interview with Author in Ankara, 28 July 2005.

⁸⁵ BASAPRESS, "Turkish Officials, Gagauz Leaders Discuss Cooperation," (5 May 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-089, 5 May 1994v.

⁸⁶ BASAPRESS, "Results of Turkish Official's Visit," (5 May 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-089, 5 May 1994s.

⁸⁷ The Giurgiulesti Port was financed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and begun in 1996. However, construction was suspended in 2001 due to problems with the project and new investors were sought. The road to the port has yet to be built.

⁸⁸ BASAPRESS, "Results of Turkish Official's Visit."

⁸⁹ Lerna K. Yanik, "The Politics of Educational Exchanges: Turkish Education in Eurasia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 56, no. 2 (2004).

scholarships to 10,000 students from Turkic Republics and approximately 1,000 scholarships to students in states from other Eurasian countries.⁹⁰ The educational experience in Turkey fostered what Demirel called a “Turkish Renaissance” by grooming the future elites in the new independent states like the Turkic republics and in communities like Gagauzia.⁹¹ In Moldova, 178 Gagauz students participated in the program and studied at Turkish universities during that first academic year, followed by nearly 200 students the next year.⁹² Although Moldova’s allocation was only 10% of the total scholarships given to each of the Turkic Republics, it had a major impact on the Gagauz community. In 1990 only 647 Gagauz students were in higher education within the Republic of Moldova.⁹³ For a group with limited opportunity within Moldova, an education in Turkey offered prospects previously unknown.

Turkey’s aid to Moldova was significant for three reasons. First, the aid was an extension of Turkey’s political aims to increase its sphere of influence. Turkey as the self-appointed regional leader, wanted to nurture relations with Moldova as it had in other neighbouring countries. Second, Turkey administered aid through the governmental structures of Moldova. Decisions on the dispersal of aid, like the 35 million dollar credit, were made by Moldova. Third, Turkey’s aid and assistance which included economic, humanitarian, and educational programs flowed to Moldova even though no agreement with the Gagauz had been reached. While the aid played a positive role in building relations between Turkey and Moldova, Turkey did not interfere in Moldova’s ongoing negotiations with the Gagauz.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 294-95. The Turkish Minister of National Education allocated 2,000 scholarships to each country: Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Kilic, "Turkey and the Gagauz," 104; King, "Minorities Policy in the Post-Soviet Republics: The Case of the Gagauzi," 748.

⁹³ King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 212.

These factors help put Turkey's relations with the Gagauz into perspective. Turkey's end goal was not focused on the Gagauz per se. Instead, the Gagauz were a means to increase Turkey's visibility and influence in Moldova as a regional leader. When Moldova's Foreign Minister visited Turkey in 1993, Turkey's Foreign Minister, Hikmet Çetin, reiterated that "...there is a bridge of friendship between Turkey and Moldova [and] this bridge is composed of the Gagauz Turks living in Moldova."⁹⁴ The bridge had helped Moldova become a "friend and neighbour," and paved the way for a visit from President Suleyman Demirel to sign more extensive agreements between the two states.⁹⁵ In this way the Gagauz facilitated the development of Moldovan-Turkish relations.

Unfortunately, the Moldovan welcoming party on the other side of the bridge was in disarray as the summer of 1993 presented a familiar scene of political discord. As discussed in Chapter Four, Moldova's parliamentary deadlocks had held up progress on the 'Gagauz question' as well as other significant issues. Demirel's visit was postponed due to conditions in Moldova. Per President Demirel, Moldova was not in a position to receive Turkey due to the internal turmoil and lack of stability.⁹⁶ The delay highlighted the limits of external actors on Moldova's internal politics. Demirel's offer to visit Moldova did not persuade the parliament to pass the Cotorobai draft bill in 1993. Instead, Demirel needed to wait until after the Agrarian victory in the 1994 parliamentary elections.

DEMIREL'S VISIT: THE "CULMINATING MOMENT"

As Turkey explored the gigantic Turkish world, state visits by Suleyman Demirel took on a dimension of their own. In April 1992, Demirel led a large delegation of Turkish

⁹⁴ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, "Moldovan Foreign Minister in Ankara: Bilateral Ties, Regional Issues Discussed," *Ankara television broadcast*, (accessed via LexisNexis), transcribed and published in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 16 June 1993a.

⁹⁵ Turkish Daily News, "Moldovan Foreign Minister Ends Official Talks," 16 June 1993b. Demirel had just recently changed positions from Prime Minister to President with his election on 16 May 1993 after former President Turgut's Özal's death the previous April while serving in office.

⁹⁶ Demirel, Personal Interview with Author.

government leaders, businessmen and journalists to four Central Asian states in order to strengthen relations and attend to diplomatic matters such as the official opening of Turkish embassies in each capital.⁹⁷ The nature of these Turkish delegations with their size, diplomatic firepower, and wide range of interests sent a clear, well-publicized message that “extensive co-operation was taking place at a variety of levels.”⁹⁸ Turkey used these delegations to increase its stature in the region and expand relations with the former Soviet States, including Moldova.

From 30 May to 3 June 1994 a Demirel delegation, modelled on the visits to the Central Asian states, combined visits to both Ukraine and Moldova. Ukraine and Moldova had much in common as former Soviet republics dealing with residual Russian military forces. Both countries were founding members of the regional Black Sea Economic Cooperation Community behind which Turkey was the driving force. Both had geographically concentrated Turkic minorities—Ukraine’s Crimean Tatars and Moldova’s Gagauz.

These Turkic groups were used to justify Turkey’s visit to Ukraine and Moldova.⁹⁹ The Crimean Tatars and Gagauz were not a diaspora or irrendenta but rather the largest minority nationality which claimed its historic homeland within the political border of Ukraine and Moldova respectively. Turkey emphasized the relationship between the minority nationality and the host country. Prior to the trip Demirel used the minority nationalities to emphasize Turkey’s leadership role in the Turkic world to a domestic audience. He stated:

⁹⁷ Agence France Presse, "Demirel Pledges Support for Uzbek Democracy," (accessed via LexisNexis), 27 April 1992.

⁹⁸ Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War*, 278.

⁹⁹ However, there were differences between Ukraine and Moldova. The Crimean Tatars, who had a long history with the Ottoman Empire, suffered discrimination and persecution under the Tsarist and Soviet regime and supported Ukraine’s independence from the Soviet Union. The Gagauz had left or “escaped” the Ottoman Empire, resettled in Bessarabia on favourable terms with the Tsarist Russian Empire, and maintained a favourable view of Soviet rule while separating themselves from independent Moldova.

“As you know, Crimean Turks live in Ukraine and Gagauz Turks in Moldova. These Turkish communities make up very important bridges of friendship between Ukraine and Moldova and Turkey. We attach great importance to the happiness of these Turks in the countries, to their living as free citizens whose equal rights are guaranteed and who can uphold their ethnic and social identities, and to the establishment and development of mutual understanding and strong cooperation between them and the local and central authorities...”¹⁰⁰

When Demirel’s entourage landed in tiny Moldova, it made a big splash. His presence alone would have generated considerable interest as he was the first western leader to visit Moldova since its independence in 1991.¹⁰¹ The significance was amplified when the local press reported how Turkey’s President Suleyman Demirel arrived with more than 140 Turkish ministers, parliament deputies, businessmen, and journalists.

Upon arrival, Demirel emphasized the importance of Moldova-Turkey relations and expressed hope regarding improved conditions for the “Turkish” Gagauz.¹⁰² This message was the theme of his visit: to strengthen relations with Moldova and to look after the Gagauz.¹⁰³ Demirel carried this message directly to Moldova’s parliament. He acknowledged that the on-going negotiations on the Gagauz autonomy statute were “Moldova’s internal affair” while expressing his opinion on what actions Turkey would prefer.¹⁰⁴ He justified a separate legal status for the Gagauz by declaring that this “branch of Turkish peoples ... were among the first dwellers in this region” and noted that the special

¹⁰⁰ FBIS, “Demirel Departs for Ukraine, Moldova,” *TRT Television Broadcast*, (30 May 1994), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, 30 May 1994d.

¹⁰¹ King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, 221.

¹⁰² BASAPRESS, “Demirel Arrives, Met by Snegur,” (1 June 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-108, 1 June 1994i.

¹⁰³ It was repeated later that same day during Demirel’s first meeting with Snegur and in his address to Parliament.

¹⁰⁴ INTERFAX, “Demirel Views Moldovan Affairs,” (31 May 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, 31 May 1994b.

status would “assure the preservation of the Gagauz national identity.”¹⁰⁵ Demirel also reiterated how the Gagauz strengthened the relationship between Moldova and Turkey.

After addressing the parliament, Demirel and Snegur travelled to southern Moldova to visit the Gagauz. Together, they toured the local Comrat University, laid the cornerstone for a Moldovan-Turkish tile and brick factory, attended an exhibit of Gagauz craftsmanship and music, and then met with groups in Ceadâr-Lunga. At each stop Snegur encouraged the Gagauz ties with Turkey. Snegur stated that “cultivating ethnic ties with Turkey would allow the Gagauz to return to their roots and to preserve their culture and transmit it to future generations.”¹⁰⁶ Demirel responded by expressing his support for the Moldovan leadership and urging the Gagauz to “respect the territorial integrity of [Moldova]” so they may “enjoy a legal status for their further development.”¹⁰⁷

From Snegur’s perspective, Demirel’s words were scripted to perfection. Snegur had already committed to resolving the Gagauz issue by creating an autonomous region as proposed in Ungureanu’s draft bill. Demirel encouraged a conciliatory attitude in Moldova’s parliament towards the creation of an autonomous region for the Gagauz. At the same time, Demirel urged the Gagauz to be patient as the majority party leaders in Moldova’s parliament attempted to pass Ungureanu’s draft legislation. Demirel’s visit was a high-visibility lobbying campaign which reinforced Snegur’s efforts to ensure passage of the autonomy bill.¹⁰⁸

Demirel returned to Turkey and put the trip in context for the domestic audience. “I have come back from a historical embrace with our Turkic brothers—the Crimean and Gagauz

¹⁰⁵ BASAPRESS, “Demirel Addresses Chişinău Parliament.”

¹⁰⁶ Socor, “Demirel Asserts Turkish Interests in Ukraine and Moldova,” 21.

¹⁰⁷ ITAR-TASS, “Turkey’s Demirel Visits Gagauz Districts,” (2 June 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-107, 2 June 1994f.

¹⁰⁸ Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author.

Turks.”¹⁰⁹ Demirel outlined his vision of Turkey’s regional role: “This is the concept. Turkey has to be interested if it is to be an important state. Turkey has a historical responsibility.... These people speak fluent Turkish. They preserved their traditions. Turkey has to show interest in Turks who are living outside of Turkey.”¹¹⁰ Demirel justified Turkey’s actions as the costs of being a “great country.”¹¹¹ This rationale was consistent with Turkey’s strategic policy of regional leadership and influence.

After Demirel’s visit, Turkey continued to provide economic, cultural, and humanitarian assistance to Moldova and the Gagauz. In July 1994 the Moldovan parliament, led by the Agrarian party leadership, passed the first reading of the Gagauz autonomy statute. As described in Chapter Five, the parliament spent the rest of 1994 resolving differences before finally passing the Gagauz autonomy statute in December 1994.

In summary, this detailed examination of Turkey’s activities shows that Moldova was one piece of a larger puzzle. Turkey had a vision for the region and adapted its programs to fit the needs of each specific country. For Moldova and the Gagauz, almost any type of assistance was helpful.

Another key point was how the aid was administered. Leaders like Snegur did not worry about Turkey’s interference with the Gagauz due to Turkey’s careful coordination through Moldova. Even Demirel’s visit was mutually beneficial for both states. Turkey spread its influence over the Black Sea region; Moldova received an endorsement of its

¹⁰⁹ FBIS, "Demirel Assesses Visits to Ukraine, Moldova," *Turkiye Radyolari Network*, (3 June 1994), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-WEU-94-108, 3 June 1994c. President Demirel also gave economic and security reasons to justify his travel to Moldova. However, Turkish trade with Moldova in 1992 totalled just \$11.8 million, approximately one percent of Moldova’s total foreign trade in 1992 and less than one-third of one percent of Turkey’s. Slightly more significant were security aspects of Turkey’s relationship with Moldova. After Demirel’s visits to Ukraine and Moldova, Russian media reported how “Russo-Turkish rivalry in the region is entering a new phase.” See FBIS, "General Gures: Russia Has Become a Serious Threat to Turkey," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (16 July 1994), translated in FBIS JPRS Report, FBIS-USR-94-085, 8 August 1994f. Demirel strongly denied that his travels were any cause for alarm as Turkey was not peddling military hardware nor signing mutual defence agreements.

¹¹⁰ Turkish Daily News, "Demirel on Foreign Policy," 4 June 1994.

¹¹¹ Suleyman Demirel, "Eurasia Today," *Eurasian Studies* 1, no. 3 (1994), 106-08.

policies towards the Gagauz. The integral question is whether Turkey's involvement was essential for Moldova to reach a settlement with the Gagauz. I now consider the degree of influence Turkey exerted on the successful passage of the autonomy legislation.

6.2.3 Turkey: A Causal Factor?

According to some authors, Turkey was the key causal factor in resolving the Gagauz question.¹¹² However, this claim is based on several disputable hypotheses. The first assumption is that an external actor like Turkey was needed to resolve Moldova's dispute with the Gagauz.¹¹³ If true, Turkey must have pressured Moldova to devolve power and at the same time convinced the Gagauz to limit their demands.¹¹⁴ The second assumption is that Turkey must have used certain "carrots and sticks" to induce the two parties to negotiate and produce a settlement.¹¹⁵ These inducements would have included offers of aid or different types of guarantees. The last assumption is that Turkey was effective because there was an ethnic relationship with the Gagauz.¹¹⁶ As the patron state, Turkey was able to interfere in Moldova due to its common Turkic heritage with the Gagauz.¹¹⁷

Turkey was certainly an influential external actor in Moldova. From Turkey's early recognition of Moldova to Demirel's high-power visit, Moldova considered Turkey as an important ally. Turkey was clearly a patron state to the Gagauz, too. This was illustrated by President Demirel when he visited Comrat and announced "...we have met as a mother with her son."¹¹⁸ Gagauz leaders called Demirel's visit the "culminating moment" in the history

¹¹² Kilic, "Turkey and the Gagauz."; Socor, "Demirel Asserts Turkish Interests in Ukraine and Moldova."; Vladimir Socor, "Five Countries Look at Ethnic Problems in Southern Moldova," *RFE/RL Research Report* 3, no. 32 (1994b); Thompson, "The Gagauz in Moldova and Their Road to Autonomy."

¹¹³ Nordquist, "Autonomy as a Conflict-Solving Mechanism--an Overview," 73.

¹¹⁴ Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination*, 456; Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 277.

¹¹⁵ Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts*, 101-02.

¹¹⁶ Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination*, 456-58; Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts*, 87-114.

¹¹⁷ Ghai, "Ethnicity and Autonomy: A Framework for Analysis," 14. Stein, "Introduction."

¹¹⁸ BASAPRESS, "Snegur, Demirel Visit Gagauz Region," (2 June 1994), reprinted in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-94-108, 6 June 1994t.

of the Gagauz people.¹¹⁹ Consequently, some authors assume that Turkey offered a variety of inducements such as humanitarian aid, loan credits, favourable trade agreements, and educational exchanges so Moldova and the Gagauz would negotiate a settlement.¹²⁰ They argue that Turkey's development aid to Moldova and the Gagauz was provisional upon an autonomy agreement. Kilic (1998) asserts that "a political solution to the Gagauz problem was set [by Turkey] as a precondition for the disbursement of the thirty-five million dollar loan."¹²¹ Others offer similar opinions about Turkey's heavy handed approach to coerce a solution.¹²²

Yet, the extent of Turkey's influence is overstated. There is little evidence to support the argument that Turkey offered aid with preconditions aimed at forcing a settlement. First, Turkey's aid flowed into Moldova well before a settlement was adopted by Moldova's parliament. Examples include almost a million dollars of TIKa assistance; hundreds of scholarships for Gagauz students; and large shipments of medical aid and food supplies.¹²³ Had preconditions been made, an increase in aid would be expected *after* the settlement was reached. This did not happen.¹²⁴ Regarding the 35 million dollar credit, it was Moldova's government, not Turkey, which agreed to the terms of the loan and had to repay it.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Stepan Topal quoted in King, "Minorities Policy in the Post-Soviet Republics: The Case of the Gagauzi," 748. The Gagauz leadership observed that during the Soviet times and later, no high level delegations travelled south to visit the Gagauz. According to Stepan Topal, this indifference "was offending for the Gagauz that in the USSR and in Moldova, the South was of a secondary importance." See Topal, Zlatov, and Telpiz, Personal Interview with Author.

¹²⁰ Kilic, "Turkey and the Gagauz."; Socor, "Demirel Asserts Turkish Interests in Ukraine and Moldova."; Thompson, "The Gagauz in Moldova and Their Road to Autonomy."

¹²¹ Kilic, "Turkey and the Gagauz," 50-51.

¹²² Socor, "Demirel Asserts Turkish Interests in Ukraine and Moldova," 20; Thompson, "The Gagauz in Moldova and Their Road to Autonomy," 13.

¹²³ Turkish Daily News, "Kizilay Sends 112 Tons of Aid to Moldova and Gagavuz Turks," 30 January 1993a.

¹²⁴ Data provided by TIKa's office in Chişinău. See Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency, *Activity of TIKa Agency from 1993-2004*, Chişinău: Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency, 2005.

¹²⁵ Moldova's government officials had hoped that taxes from the Gagauz autonomous region would help pay back the loan. This proved not to be the case and after a few years, Moldova was having difficulty making the payments due to the terms of the loan. Moldova requested help from Turkey to renegotiate the terms with Eximbank in order for Moldova to meet its commitments. See Mariana Durllesteanu, Personal Interview with Author in London, 22 September 2005.

Moldova waited until the Gagauz autonomous region was established before distributing the funds to the Gagauz. As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, it was Moldova, not the Gagauz, who delayed the creation and implementation of the autonomous region.

This leads to the second problem with this argument: Turkey's ability to provide assistance to the Gagauz was dependent upon "authorisation of the central Moldovan government."¹²⁶ As shown by the 35 million dollar credit, Turkey laid down certain principles about what projects to fund while Moldova's government determined when Turkey's aid was dispersed.¹²⁷ Per the TIKa office, no matter how large or small the assistance for the Gagauz, it had to go through Chişinău as a "major diplomatic crisis would not be "good for [Turkey]."¹²⁸ Instead of preconditions set by Turkey, Moldova's government dictated the financial terms by which the aid was released.¹²⁹

Third, the context in which Turkey offered aid is noteworthy. Turkey's assistance to Moldova followed a pattern already established by Turkey's regional foreign aid program. Moldova was granted \$35 million in credit from an already established Eximbank \$1 billion loan.¹³⁰ TIKa set up a program coordination office in Moldova after it already had established six program offices in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Two hundred scholarships for Gagauz students were managed by the same program established to handle the 10,000 scholarships offered to the Central Asian republics. Economic ties, education exchanges, cultural programs, financial assistance, and aid packages were a motorway to unite the historic homeland to Turkey. Once the aid was flowing, Turkey discovered that it took minimal effort and capital to build side roads to other countries like Moldova and give them

¹²⁶ Arik, Personal Interview with Author.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Hakan Fidan, Personal Interview with Author in Ankara, 28 July 2005.

¹²⁹ Moldova determined how the contracts would be drawn up and approved. See Durllesteanu, Personal Interview with Author.

¹³⁰ Kilic, "Turkey and the Gagauz," 50-51. Demirel himself called the loans extended by Eximbank as "clumsy and inept." See FBIS, "Comments on United Nations Report, Visit," *TRT Television Broadcast*, (3 June 1994), transcribed and published in FBIS Daily Report, 3 June 1994b.

access to Turkey's foreign assistance. Turkish aid for Moldova was built upon a pre-existing infrastructure used to transport aid to the Turkic republics, refuting the idea that Turkey brought aid to Moldova in order to coerce a settlement with the Gagauz.

Did Turkey's aid have a causal influence in bringing about a settlement between Moldova and the Gagauz? The evidence does not support this argument. Turkey's aid did not alter Gagauz demands for territorial autonomy. As discussed in Chapter One, Gagauz demands were consistent and did not change with Turkey's active involvement in the region. Turkey's aid also did not induce Moldova to seek a solution. Snegur began discussions with the Gagauz just after Moldova became an independent state. Even when Turkey's assistance began to flow, the arrangement by which aid was dispersed kept Turkey out of the negotiations between Moldova and the Gagauz. These were bilateral direct discussions without an external intermediary.¹³¹ It was in these bilateral talks that Moldova and Gagauz leaders paved the road to reconciliation and produced draft legislation creating Gagauz autonomy as described in Chapter Four. Both Cotorobai, the lead negotiator from Moldova, and Buzadzhi, the lead Gagauz negotiator, rejected the assertion that Turkey was instrumental in helping the two sides reach a compromise.¹³²

Finally, Turkey's aid failed to break the parliamentary deadlocks in order to produce a settlement. As shown in Chapter Five, institutional changes were needed to end the stalemate and allow party leaders to shepherd the legislation through the parliament. Demirel's commanding presence in parliament was long forgotten in December 1994 when Snegur and the majority party leadership had to manoeuvre the legislation past Lucinschi through its second reading in parliament. From the beginning, throughout the parliamentary process, and to the end, Turkey did not affect the key junctures in the settlement process.

¹³¹ Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author.

¹³² Buzadzhi, Personal Interview with Author; Cotorobai, Personal Interview with Author.

TURKEY'S ROLES

While not a significant factor in producing the settlement, it should be noted that Turkey had a positive influence on both sides of the negotiating table. Figure 6.1 below illustrates how Turkey's aid was administered by Moldova to the Gagauz, accompanied by Figure 6.2 which shows how the aid created roles by which Turkey influenced both Moldova and the Gagauz.

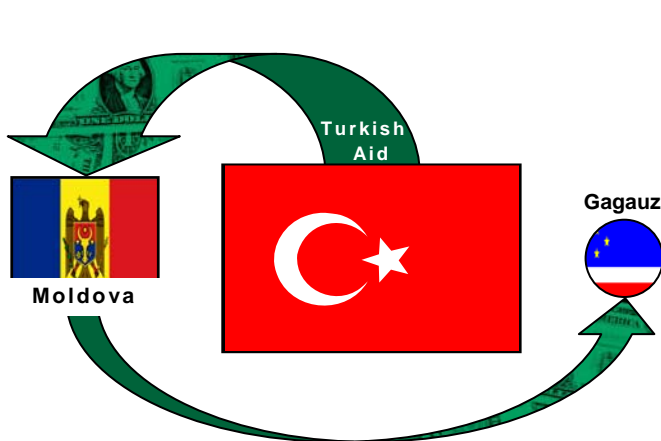


Figure 6.1: Administration of Turkish aid to the Gagauz

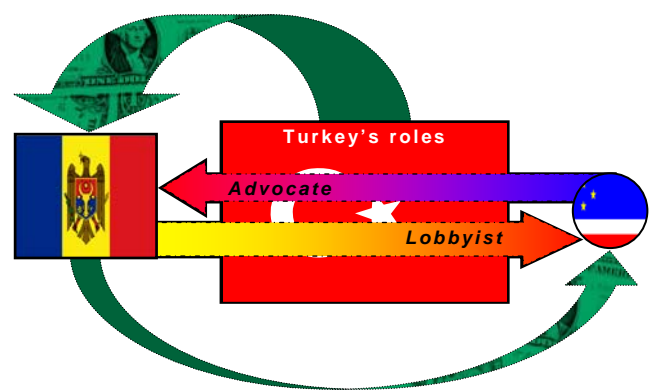


Figure 6.2: Roles for Turkey enabled by Turkish aid

As illustrated in Figure 6.1 and 6.2, Turkey's aid allowed it to become an **advocate** of the Gagauz with Moldova; a force that could declare the Gagauz cause as legitimate.

According to Topal, "Chişinău would never call us a people—an ethnic group or something else but not a people. [Demirel] said 'This people are a small branch of the big Turkic tree.'"¹³³ Demirel's words reflected Turkey's defence of the Gagauz claim that they were a people and a nation, not a minority or colony.¹³⁴

¹³³ Topal, Zlatov, and Telpiz, Personal Interview with Author. However, Turkey's ethnic ties with the Gagauz were constrained by the fact that the Gagauz leadership viewed their friends from Turkey as 'cousins' more than long lost 'brothers' or 'sons' (as Demirel referred to them). After noting the similarity of language, most Gagauz would quickly point out that the Gagauz are Orthodox Christian as opposed to their Muslim benefactors.

¹³⁴ Arik, Personal Interview with Author; Demirel, Personal Interview with Author.

Turkey also looked out for the Gagauz by urging Moldova to compromise and not resort to economic blackmail. During the bilateral negotiations, Moldova continued to pay the police forces, run the transportation network, and provide basic services for the Gagauz population. Ambassador Arik, the first head of TIKA, boasted that sometimes the Turkish officials needed to “box the ears of our Moldovan friends” when they appeared to be making the Gagauz “second rate citizens.”¹³⁵ Whether or not Moldova’s leaders heeded Turkey’s admonishment, Gagauz leaders believed that they had an advocate in Turkey.

Turkey’s other valuable role was on behalf of Moldova. Moldova viewed Turkey as a natural **lobbyist** for a territorially secure Moldova.¹³⁶ By sending Turkish aid for the Gagauz through Moldova’s central government, Turkey was well placed to lobby the Gagauz on behalf of Moldova.¹³⁷ Snegur’s presidential advisor reflected on how Turkey emphasized Moldova’s control of the aid. “From the beginning, Turkey stated its position clearly to the Gagauz. When we were going to the meetings with the so called Gagauz leaders, [Turkey’s] Ambassador said: You can count on the Turkish cultural and economic support only if you make peace with the Moldovans and find a solution to the Gagauz problem within the Republic of Moldova.”¹³⁸ Turkey went to great pains to ensure the Gagauz understood that the “cultural and economic support” would come through Moldova and that a settlement would be negotiated without Turkey’s interference. As a result Moldova’s presidential office endorsed Turkey and its “constructive role” in encouraging a peaceful settlement.¹³⁹

Like a good lobbyist, Turkey often promoted Moldova’s interests with the Gagauz.¹⁴⁰ One example was an official visit of Moldovan parliamentarians to Turkey which included

¹³⁵ Arik, Personal Interview with Author.

¹³⁶ Ibid; Fidan, Personal Interview with Author; Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author.

¹³⁷ King, “Minorities Policy in the Post-Soviet Republics: The Case of the Gagauzi,” 749, 52-53.

¹³⁸ Grebeshnikov, Personal Interview with Author.

¹³⁹ Socor, “Turkey Playing “Constructive Role” in Moldova.”

¹⁴⁰ Examples include a trip by Turkey’s General Consul to Comrat to urge local leaders to fully participate in Moldova’s parliamentary election and Turkish officials’ endorsement of Moldova’s plan to switch from Cyrillic to Latin script.

the parliamentary Speaker, Alexandru Moshanu. After returning to Moldova, Moshanu promptly relayed Turkey's message that the Gagauz population should be "loyal and law-abiding citizens" of Moldova.¹⁴¹ Moshanu claimed that all of Turkey's five leading Turkish parties agreed that aid to the Gagauz should be administered by Moldova's government.¹⁴²

Turkey's efforts had a positive effect on Moldova and the Gagauz. Stepan Topal, president of the Gagauz Republic, recalled how the Turkish leadership was "constantly calming us down" and urging the Gagauz to avoid "any confrontation."¹⁴³ Moldova benefited as the Gagauz gradually learned some of the subtle intonations of Turkish diplomacy.¹⁴⁴ This was partly because Turkish diplomats convinced the Gagauz to "not ask for too much" when negotiating the particulars of the autonomous region.¹⁴⁵

6.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I considered whether external factors were necessary for Moldova and the Gagauz to reach a compromise. I assessed if Turkey, as a powerful external actor in Moldova and patron state for the Gagauz, used various forms of foreign aid to induce Moldova and the Gagauz to negotiate a settlement.

My findings did not support this hypothesis. Turkey did not set preconditions on foreign assistance nor did it coerce Moldova and the Gagauz to negotiate. While Turkey improved the environment in which negotiations took place, Turkey and its aid were not essential for a settlement to be reached. Because the aid was administered by Moldova, Turkey's influence on the negotiations was minimized. This was not surprising as Turkey's aid was simply part of a regional plan of foreign assistance rather than a singular project

¹⁴¹ RFE/RL Weekly Review, "Moldova, Turkey Agree on Cultural Aid to Gagauz," *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, no. 20 (1992c).

¹⁴² FBIS, "Delegation Head Describes Ankara Visit, Talks," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (29 April 1992), translated in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-92-085, 1 May 1992b.

¹⁴³ Topal, Zlatov, and Telpiz, Personal Interview with Author.

¹⁴⁴ Oktay Tanrisever, Personal Interview with Author in Ankara, 26 July 2005.

¹⁴⁵ Gheorghy Arabaji, Personal Interview with Author in Comrat, 13 September 2004.

aimed at facilitating an agreement. In this way Turkey played a supporting role while the lead actors, Moldova and the Gagauz, worked to end the drama.

Rejecting Turkey's causal influence increases support for the argument that institutional arrangements led to the successful settlement of the Gagauz question. As noted by George and Bennett (2005), it is important to examine alternative explanations to appreciate the hypothesis of interest.¹⁴⁶ Understanding the limits of Turkey's role increases the likelihood that findings from Moldova can be applied to other cases, even those which do not have a significant external actor or patron state. The conclusions reached in this chapter generate optimism that countries can successfully negotiate their own settlements to resolve difficult minority nationality issues.

¹⁴⁶ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 217.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This thesis is the first to chart the parliamentary path Moldova followed to produce territorial autonomy for the Gagauz. It also adds a previously understudied case to the comparative research on post-Communist state development, conflict resolution, and nationalism. I now review the main findings of the thesis, consider the long term impact of the settlement on Moldova, and look ahead to the contribution of this work to future research on national minorities.

7.1 Findings

The central argument is that institutional arrangements played the key role in bringing about autonomy for the Gagauz. Specifically, I identify features of the Moldovan parliament which enabled Moldova's leaders to guide the autonomy statute for the Gagauz from the bargaining table, through committee, and finally to the floor of the assembly. I show that presidential power had a notable effect on the legislative branch. I also argue that the manner in which political leaders used institutional power directly influenced the willingness of minority groups to participate in the political process.

A key discovery is that Moldova needed to make specific institutional changes in order to settle the Gagauz question. These changes made Moldova's majority party leaders stronger by giving them more control over party members and the parliamentary proceedings. It was the institutional changes which provided the means by which majority party leaders could break the parliamentary deadlock and pass the autonomy legislation. Three changes were particularly significant. First, changes in the electoral law advantaged larger parties over smaller parties. Second, new parliamentary rules countered potential veto players and improved party discipline. Third, changes in the constitution strengthened the president. The president then used his increased authority to assist majority party leaders in parliament. With these institutional changes, Moldova's party leaders commanded more agenda control,

faced relatively few veto players, and enjoyed the means to enforce party discipline. The conditions were then available to vote the Gagauz autonomy bill into law, even when determined opposition to the measure existed.

The critical nature of these institutional changes is understood when examining the three-year stalemate which preceded the successful passage of the Gagauz autonomy bill. During the stalemate, Moldova's top political leaders who were in favour of Gagauz autonomy could not produce a policy outcome to resolve the Gagauz question. Institutional weaknesses in Moldova's parliament prevented the passage of compromise legislation. More precisely, a lack of agenda control, strong veto players, and undisciplined political parties left Moldova's political leadership handicapped. The political system hindered substantive policy changes, and critical issues like autonomy for the Gagauz went unresolved. It was the institutional changes which equipped the leadership with the tools they needed to deal with the demands of the separatist Gagauz.

An additional finding is the explanation of why the Gagauz separated from Moldova in the first place. The broad-brush assertion is that the Gagauz, like other minority nationalities, reacted to Moldovan nationalism. Instead, I show that the majority party's exclusive control of the parliamentary agenda negatively impacted on the Gagauz and provoked their decision to separate. Examples of this 'exclusion' included: reducing Gagauz participation in key parliamentary committees; refusing to publish minority committee reports; and rushing significant proposals of interest to the Gagauz through legislative proceedings. Moldova's majority party leadership used their parliamentary power to block the Gagauz from reasonable access to the legislative agenda. As a result, Gagauz leaders sought alternative means to secure their demands for autonomy. The solution for the Gagauz was to separate from the Moldovan state and form an autonomous republic within the Soviet Union.

The separation of the Gagauz from Moldova highlights another important finding. The manner in which majority party leaders used their control of the parliamentary agenda directly impacted on Gagauz participation in the political process. In the Soviet Union access to the political agenda kept the Gagauz engaged even when their demands were *not* met. Prior to the 1990 elections, Communist party leaders used parliamentary procedures to allow the demands of minority nationalities to be considered. The Soviet regime's inclusivity was a significant factor in the initial Gagauz decision to work for a parliamentary solution. Access to the legislative agenda, generous representation on parliamentary committees, and opportunities for minority reports were some of the inclusive rules and procedures used by Soviet and MSSR leadership. By allowing the Gagauz minority to 'make itself heard' the Soviet leadership influenced the Gagauz decision to engage in the political process. This was an important feature of the Soviet regime.

An analysis of these findings identifies two aspects of agenda control: (1) the strength of the majority's control of the agenda and (2) the manner in which the majority uses the control vis-à-vis national minorities. I consider the level of agenda control (weak or strong) for each period and how it was used (exclusive or inclusive). In Moldova, when majority leaders had strong agenda control and excluded minority nationalities from participation in the political process, the Gagauz response was to *separate* and pursue a path of self-determination. When majority party leaders wanted to accommodate Gagauz demands but lacked sufficient agenda control, a three year *stalemate* could not be broken. In the end, institutional changes gave accommodating leaders the necessary agenda control to reach a *settlement*. The relationship between agenda control and political outcomes is shown in the Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Relationship between Agenda Control and Political Outcomes (1988-1995)

<i>AGENDA CONTROL</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>Strong</i>
<i>Exclusive</i>		Separation (1988-90)
<i>Inclusive</i>	Stalemate (1991-93)	Settlement (1994-95)

This analysis of Moldova's experience sheds light on the ideal institutional arrangement for dealing with minority nationalities. First, political leaders must include the national minorities in building a political solution. Second, the leadership should have sufficient control of the agenda in order to guide accommodating measures through the legislative process, especially if they include delicate provisions negotiated outside of the parliament. Majority party leaders must then be strong enough to pass legislation which meets the demands of the national minorities whilst appeasing the majority. These optimal conditions for compromise set the stage for Moldova's success with the Gagauz in 1994-95.

7.2 Impact on Moldova

How did the process of reaching a settlement on the Gagauz question affect Moldova and its development as an independent state? Moldova learned from the parliamentary deadlocks and made institutional changes to strengthen the majority party. These changes also strengthened the president and balanced power between the two branches of government in Moldova's premier-presidential regime.¹ The new constitution gave the president considerable agenda power, while the legislature constrained presidential authority.

¹ The premier-presidential regime is marked by presidents who are (1) popularly elected, (2) possess considerable powers, and (3) share power with a premier and cabinet, subject to a vote of confidence in parliament. See Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 23.

In part, the impressive resolution of the Gagauz question was evidence of Moldova's resistance toward a more authoritative regime. The strength of the parliament was unusual compared with other legislatures in the region.² Both the autonomy agreement and new constitution were landmark legislative achievements. However, the ability of the legislature and president to act decisively relied on one of two optimal scenarios: (1) aligned interests of the president with the parliamentary majority; or (2) a disciplined veto-proof majority in the parliament. In the premier-presidential regime, if the prime minister and parliament are at odds with the president, the performance of the state suffers.

The optimal scenario in Moldova faded away as the president and the parliamentary majority gradually shifted apart not long after the autonomy settlement. Trouble began when Snegur and then Lucinschi opted out of the Agrarian party in order to build support for their own 1996 presidential election campaigns. At the urging of these presidential candidates, many deputies left the Agrarian party which saw its majority status dwindle. The Agrarian Party faithful nominated Prime Minister Sangheli as their candidate for the Presidency who had been associated with the Agrarians since 1992. However, when Sangheli lost the election, the Agrarian party never recovered. In the following parliamentary election, the Agrarians failed to pass the minimum threshold and lacked any representation in the new parliament.

Moldova's institutional arrangements continued to evolve. It struggled with a divided government after the 1998 parliamentary election. Lucinschi had been elected president in 1996 over Snegur, but the party bloc who supported Lucinschi only garnered 18% of the vote and twenty-four deputies in the 1998 parliamentary elections.³ The Communist Party of

² Way, "Pluralism by Default in Moldova," 130.

³ The pro-Lucinschi "For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova" electoral bloc included small groups like the "Civic Party of Moldova," "Forta Noua (New Force) Socio-political Movement", and the "Peoples' Democratic Party of Moldova." Lucinschi's lack of parliamentary support can be partly attributed to the nonconcurrence of

Moldova translated their 30% of the popular vote into 40% of the seats in parliament. A tenuous minority coalition government formed which was held together only by their dislike of the Communists.

Disagreement between President Lucinschi and parliament, combined with a fragile coalition, resulted in a weak government and disjointed policy.⁴ Less than a year after the election, Prime Minister Ion Ciubic resigned due to his inability to work with his divided cabinet.⁵ Lucinschi had trouble replacing Ciubic because of his weak support in parliament and divisions within the minority coalition. Four of Lucinschi's nominees for prime minister were rejected in 1999 alone. A fifth nominee was able to form a government but suffered a no-confidence vote after six months in office.

Moldova's ineffective institutional arrangement caused both the parliament and president to draft new proposals for the division of political power. Moldova's institutions needed to evolve but were hampered by a disagreement between the parliament and the president. Shugart and Carey (1992) explain that the inherent weakness of the premier-presidential regime is the lack of "clarity of the division of executive responsibilities."⁶ Predictably, Lucinschi asked for a presidential system with strong control of the government whilst the parliament put forward an opposite plan calling for a parliamentary system of government with control over selecting the president. In a rare moment of unity, the separate voting blocs in Moldova's parliament came together in July 2000 to pass a constitutional amendment creating a parliamentary state. By a vote of 87 to 6, parliament overrode Lucinschi's veto of the plan and consolidated executive power with the parliament.

the presidential and parliamentary elections. See Haggard, McCubbins, and Shugart, "Conclusion: Policy Making in Presidential Systems," 321.

⁴ Minority coalitions are inherently weak in premier-presidential type regimes. See Kaare Strøm, *Minority Government and Majority Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁵ RFE/RL Newline, "Moldovan Officials Differ over Reasons for Cabinet Crisis," 3, no. 22 (1999).

⁶ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 75.

I propose that the parliamentary system Moldova created in 2000 was the final step in a process begun in 1994. The institutional changes in 1994 were made to consolidate power and give control of the legislative agenda to the majority party. It was an effective arrangement in 1994-95 due to a rare combination of majority party strength and the good relationship between the majority party and the president. Without the good relationship, a struggle for power between parliament and the president caused deadlock and eventually led to more institutional changes. Moldova's adoption of a pure parliamentary system was an effort to construct the optimal institutional arrangement for producing policy outcomes.

7.3 Looking Ahead

Building on the findings made in this work, future research can apply the causal relationships identified here to other states. Broader comparative work can test these causal relationships and generate more confidence in their application. The goal is to explain with greater fidelity why a particular policy is enacted or not.

Understanding the causal relationship between institutional features and policy outcomes can also provide predictive insight for practitioners. This case showed how changes in electoral law, parliamentary rules, and constitutional authorities allowed an inclusive-minded majority to create an autonomous region for a separatist national minority. The next step is to extend this research to policy makers and provide assurances that specific institutional features can produce certain outcomes, especially in relation to national minorities.

Future work could also expand on how solutions *other* than territorial autonomy are negotiated, passed, and eventually implemented. Studies on separatist groups often focus on *solutions* without appreciating the political *process* by which these solutions are adopted.⁷

⁷ For three examples, see Coakley, *The Territorial Management of Ethnic Conflict*; William Safran and Ramón Maíz Suárez, *Identity and Territorial Autonomy in Plural Societies* (London: F. Cass, 2000); Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton:

Additional research can map out these processes to help practitioners navigate the legislative paths which lead to conflict resolution.

The lasting success of Moldova's autonomous region for the Gagauz makes the political events of 1988-95 even more remarkable and worthy of study. Both sides continue to work within the basic framework designed by the 1994 statute.⁸ A ceremony was held in 2004 to commemorate the ten year anniversary of the autonomy agreement.⁹ Moldova's president, Vladimir Voronin, praised the "audacity" of his predecessors for promoting autonomy as a solution.¹⁰ He rightly stated that the Gagauz model "should serve as an example for resolving interethnic conflicts."¹¹

The issues Moldova faced were not unique. Several troublesome separatist crises emerged out of the former Soviet and Yugoslav states. One source catalogued almost 300 cases of ethnic separatism and irredentism that have occurred since 1945, while another dataset recently listed an equal number of minority groups "at risk."¹² Scholars agree that help is needed as "contemporary states have not developed effective means for

Princeton University Press, 2003). As noted in Chapter Six, some conflict resolution studies have overemphasized the role of third party actors on domestic disputes. For two examples, see Ghai, ed., *Autonomy and Ethnicity: Negotiating Competing Claims in Multi-Ethnic States*; Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts*.

⁸ In 2003, Moldova's parliament amended Moldova's constitution. Article 111 had originally designated that "places in the south of the Republic of Moldova may be granted special forms of autonomy." The new wording specifically designated that "Gagauzia is an autonomous territorial unit...representing a form of self-determination of the Gagauz people..." See Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, *Constitution of the Republic of Moldova* (Chişinău: Constitutional Court of Moldova, 2004). According to Tabunshik, the Gagauz Başkan, this action was needed in order to strengthen the legal foundation of the autonomous region and remove the ambiguity. See Gheorghy D. Tabunshik, Personal Interview with Author in Comrat, 16 September 2004.

⁹ Michael Shafir, "Moldovan President Hails Anniversary of Gagauz-Yeri Autonomous Region," *RFE/RL Newsline*, 23 December 2004.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Gurr, *Peoples Versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century*; Hewitt and Cheetham, *Encyclopedia of Modern Separatist Movements*.

accommodating ethnocultural diversity....As long as minority groups feel that their interests cannot be accommodated within existing states, they will contemplate secession.”¹³

This thesis provides valuable insight on how one contemporary state developed an effective means for accommodating ethnocultural diversity. By understanding the relationship between institutions and political outcomes, states can achieve the delicate balance between the right of the majority to govern and the right of the minority to be heard.¹⁴ It is hoped that deeply divided states with minority nationalities will find non-violent solutions by applying the lessons learned from Moldova’s adoption of autonomy for the Gagauz.

¹³ Kymlicka, "Is Federalism a Viable Alternative to Secession," 112.

¹⁴ Huber, "Reform of Parliament."

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